1: Messing E-5 (1953-1954) 1957 MP5 Amhara MP5
Ethiopia MP1

A in the minds of most Amhara:

E 56 1. The Coptic Abyssinian, on which top level the Amharic-speaker and the Tigrina-speaker are equal except for the added Amhara prestige due to the "Solomonic Dynasty". Both consider themselves "attentām" (of noble bones). Both consider themselves superior to all other groups, notably the "conquered nations", infidels, "laboring classes" and "lower races". Both consider themselves the descendants of the Hadhrami invaders of the late pre-Christian era.

As conquerors, the Amhara believe in their superior toughness. The aphorism says:

A [537] "The aged Amhara is (powerful) like bärbärē
the aged Galla is (soft) like butter".

A [101] The word Amhara is itself derived from "amari", meaning one who is pleasing, agreeable, beautiful and gracious.

On the other hand, the services rendered by Galla cavalry to Menelik II (e.g. in his victory over the Italians at Aduwa) are well known and admitted. In reward, many of the Galla feudal nobles were permitted to retain in fief 1/4 of their land and its serfs, so that a Galla "Balbat" (landowner) class has arisen and prospered. They are in ostentatious presence at all national festivals in Addis Ababa, notably the annual coronation festival of Haile Selassie, when their young men are seen and heard, jumping with brandished spears or sticks, shouting the loyalty of the "Oromo" to "Addis Ababa" (symbolic for Menelik and Haile Selassie). Among the modern-educated Amhara, and even among many uneducated Amhara of Shoa province, intermarriage with Galla Balbat families is not rare, nowadays, especially if the Galla partner is wealthier than the Amhara, and if the Galla is the bride. This is still resis-

181 bandry, to achieving maximum benefits with a minimum of original invention. Similarly, in non-material culture, a minimum of effort has gone into the elaboration, amendment or improvement of institutions of social organization, but a great deal of ingenuity has gone into spiritual elaborations such as the Zar-cult.

Such a disposition of human energy seems strange and out of balance particularly to the Western mind. How can it be explained?

Perhaps the major clue is contained in the Amhara proverb:

● [539] "From cleverness of hand, (you get) serfdom;
from cleverness of mouth (you become) boss."

461 554 This has long been a basic Amhara attitude, even a world view for them. The Amhara has seen much justification for associating skill of hand with slavery and near-slave status, while associating mental and spiritual skills with leadership: as military officer, judge, bishop, or zar-doctor.

If he becomes impoverished, an Amhara will go to a district where he is not known (in order not to shame his family) to work at some unskilled labor. He is then less despised than if he were to learn a skilled manual trade. For while the first can be excused as a temporary mishap, or smiled off as a lark, the latter, by his painstaking application to a manual skill, indicates a permanent association with the psychological and social patterns in the "slave category". Moreover, he may, in his apprenticeship, become associated not only with the occupation and socially lower status of his teacher, but, since the latter is

[352] accumulate there when poured over the limp sheets of bread.

251 (7) Food staples must be stored out of reach of domestic animals, on horizontal slats fastened between the horizontal beam and walls. On these slats lie flat cakes of "abshelo" (pre-fermented and baked hops), bunches of sorghum, husks of maize, etc.

352 To provide additional privacy, togas can be hung across. This was done in the past particularly at dinner [754] time, to protect the eaters from the "evil eye" in the [609] presence of non-kinsmen, and is still done in some remote areas, unless the peasant prefers to postpone his meal until the stranger has gone away, so as not to offend him.

342 The tuqul is regarded as a good, sound habitation by the Amhara. It is compared to the round tent of the king and duke ("ras") which not so long ago was the center of activities (if not the actual capital) of the province and [554] country. On the other hand, reactangular or square huts, "säqäla", are regarded as carrying low prestige, little more than temporary lean-to's of hunters. The proverb indicates this low regard of a säqäla: [539]

"Of children, the worst is the bastard;
of foods, the hardest is beans;
of clothing, the poorest is nätäla (half-toga);
of housing, the poorest is säqäla."

Response: "(but) from enemy, the bastard son will defend you;
toward better days the bean will let you survive;
in (warm) daytime, the nätäla will clothe you;
till a better is built, the säqäla will shelter you".

There are special tuquls of varying degrees of sturdiness:

224 Before
535 going on an elephant hunt, for example, he performed the "boasting dance", "fukkara", largely with his shoulders and upper arms, predicting his feats; and his retainers honored him by declaring their confidence in his prowess, jumping up and down in the "hota" dance, chanting repeatedly:

[539] "Elephant-killer, (to) your home-
elephant-killer, take him home".
(Hunter:) Elephant-killer (I am), to home (I'll take him)."
(Retainers:)" When it (the elephant) will be moving,
he will kill it!"

224 The elephant-killer, considered braver than the lion-
554 killer, was called "addo" and given a special decoration to wear on forehead and upper arm by the king or feudal lord. A warrior who had killed a human enemy was called "geday" (lit. killer) and held prestige equal to the elephant-killer. Now that rifles are used in place of spears, such heroes have become more common and decorations among the Amhara have fallen into disuse.

224 Besides the big-game, edible jungle animals mentioned
825 before under "fauna", there are numerous wild game, mainly gazelles and partridges, hunted near human habitations to increase the food supply and for occasional sport:

Ethiopian duiker - "midaqwa", very common near habitations on the woyna dega, an antelope the size of a small goat, often approaching hamlets at dusk. It is considered the "cattle" of the zar spirits, and sacrifice to them is thus called "midaqwa".

[782]

Bushbuck - "demula", similar but medium-sized ante-

243 of "madiga".

[311] The term "tyëff" also has a projection. Good, fertile, fat land is still classified as "lämm tyëff", in distinction to "tyëff" land, meaning average usable land for cereals.

Mashella is used as a concept in the following proverb:

• [539] "(Both) the seed of mashella
and the stalk, are good"

This is to say that if the parent had good qualities, the son will be a "chip off the old block."

Numerous distinctions are made in the types and qualities of each of the cereals. Among tyëff the farmer distinguishes "bunnen" which grows and matures rapidly even in käskäräm immediately on the end of the rainy season. In barley, the "aja" is disliked because of its coarseness, but its green fields, irrigated, stand out among the sun-yellowed stubble in the dry season and provide a pleasant sight, as well as year-round crops. "Ferey gebs" is a fine choice barley, and "sänär qolo" (a long-eared variety) is roasted as a daily condiment.

248 Cotton, called "tet", is grown in lowland areas. To separate the husks, a roller of scrap iron is preferred; it is worked on a rock. When rain has occurred during the maturing of cotton, its quality is lowered. The typical Amhara prefers to buy his raw cotton on the market and have his wife or female servant clean, card and spin it. Then he calls in the weaver or takes the spun cotton to him, to make a toga.

241
262 are no ready markets.

Sesame seed (Sesamum indicum) called "selit", is rather rare, and, as the name indicates, not originally native to Abyssinia. The Amhara, finding it difficult to grow, consider it an expensive and delicious delicacy, and consume the oil only as a rare treat.

Sunflower seed (Heliantus annuus), called "suf" is not a field crop, only occasionally planted, often semi-wild.

244 Vegetables are considered garden crops, and are planted near the hamlet on the hillside, while field crops are in the valley and river flood plains. Apart from kitchen gardens, which are considered necessities because of the spices that are consumed daily, other vegetables, particularly cabbage (gomän) are despised as poor food (food of p poor people or in times of famine). Consequently the Amhara raises few vegetables and small quantities.

Cabbage (gomän), and a white variety, "aydärgë", resistant to climatic change.

252 Chick-Peas, "shembera" (Cicer arietum), the most common, generally eaten roasted, but also boiled in the lenten season, and baked into bread to stretch tyeff in case of crop failure. Shembera is the proverbial staple, even in war and famine, never expected to fail. The proverb says:

244
539 "She who has not born, will never carry her load;

244
[539]

(but a fallow) shembera (field) will bear (next year)".

meaning that a barren woman will never carry a child in womb, but a shembera field will bear again and again. The Amhara realizes that this legume improves the soil. It will grow in poor soil, resist drought. The harvest is late, usually February.

Peas, called "atar" are also grown in quantity, for similar reasons: they grow well in poor soil, and are especially important in lent.

"meser" The collective term for lentils.

Broad bean, "bagella" also grows in poor and eroded soil, and is much planted. It is then roasted, or boiled, or mixed in curry (wot).

[252]

Onions and garlic, the latter called "white onion" are grown in kitchen gardens as ingredients of wot.

Grey bean called "adangware", planted at beginning of heavy rains as fenced-in garden crop, eaten raw, considered semi-wild, and not prestige food.

Gourds, "qel", e.g. "dubba", pumpkin-type (Cucurbita maxima), are grown inside hamlets and boiled and cut into strips in wot (curry-type stew). Some gourds are planted in dug holes, others grow on vines to the height of roofs, on which they rest for support.

Roots, similar to potatoes, called "dennech" are grown in Shoa, but are of minor importance

437 weavers, potters, etc. They, particularly tanners, may bring finished products to market but only for "show", claiming these items are ordered and merely waiting for the customer to come and fetch.

Even semi-specialists of light-weight products such as umbrella makers and weavers of baskets and mäsob, table follow this practice or bring only as much as they feel sure will sell, even at the risk of having to turn away customers. For the ultimate shame would be to have to carry unsold goods back home. This is avoided by selling very cheaply just when the market closes at dusk. The proverb advises the buyer, therefore, as follows:

[539]

"To church (go) early,
to market (go) late."

To avoid being outwitted, the Amhara seller usually begins the transaction by asking the buyer to suggest a price he is willing to pay. If the amount is within reason, and if the purchaser is on the same economic level, they will agree on the spot, without haggling. Doubts and dickering occur only when the customer is a stranger or a foreigner, since then the seller has to guess how high he can go, and how much he must charge to avoid being mocked. Such a price increase is called "wagga asarrara". If there is no immediate agreement, the Amhara tries to disconcert his customer, or supplier, by indirect insults such as:

"I'm not expecting a hyena as my guest" ("yäjeb engeda yälläbeñ"), meaning, the animal you are trying to sell me is so lean that it is close to death and soon will be food for the hyena.

695 The traditional oath, "May the ruler die" (If I lie), is still in full use. This oath is called "semanya". As mentioned above, perjury was once a very serious offense, even a capital one, later was penalized by substitution of "blood money", i.e. 80 Thalers fine. Until recently, provincial farmers still invoked the name of the head of their old provincial dynasty in this oath, the "ras", or the name of the long-dead Menelik II. Since 1941, however, the name of the present emperor is [643] universally used, "Haile Selassie yemut". It is in a very real sense a form of acknowledgement of the supreme power of the ruler, whose supreme power over and above the feudal system is regarded, traditionally, as a protection from chaos, lawlessness and uprisings that destroy and cause suffering. The proverb says:

[539] "When the emperor dies,
with whom will there be judging?".

The oath "Haile Selassie yemut" is used also to arrest lawbreakers, much as English police might arrest "in the name of the king".

672 Another old legal tradition still in full force is that of the "was", the personal guarantor. To obtain a loan or a job, the applicant must always present at least one reputable guarantor, who is then personally responsible for making up any default or damage or misbehavior, and who can even be jailed in case the culprit escapes. He acts as personal bondsman for a defendant, to avoid his being held for trial in jail. This "was"

695 661 er court, if he felt he had the means. In this case the judge might sometimes not appropriate the wager for fear of having to surrender it again later.

539 691 There are numerous proverbs characterizing roles in litigation, and counseling behavior and decisions to be made in certain situations:

"The young lawyer,
in the beginning he acclaims to heaven;
later on, he will look to the ground"
(Moral: always choose an old, experienced lawyer, with many reserve tricks up his sleeve).

"Don't seize the tail of the leopard;
but if you did, don't let go."
(Meaning: Don't go to court against a good talker, or "great man", or wealthy adversary; but once started, fight as hard as hard as you can, or else he will ruin you).

"Even if you know how,
against the judge do not debate".
"Judge, why your partiality?
the loser must pay you (anyway)".

"One witness need not make you tremble,
(just as) a one-eyed (person)cannot dance well."

[17] The pattern of the wager resembles, in part, that of the "khabdh" of Arab bedouin.[76]

76. Ibid.

793 Parish priests, (unlike mänhër scholars) are also
[66] not bashful about demanding their due (produce tithe, sheep, honey, even cash) from their tenants of church land. Sardonic peasant humor expresses this in the proverb:

[539] "The bashful priest,
the blind donkey,
(are one)" . (i.e. both would be helpless and starve to death).

532 Among artisans who do specialist work for the
346 church is the artist of church paintings, usually highly colorful and realistic scenes from the suffering of the saints, in morbid and gory detail; the beauties of heaven and the trinity; the horrors of hell ruled by a chained, soul-munching Satan; etc. These religious and semi-religious story illustrations and legends are painted on canvas and then attached to the inside of church walls.

874 Church students are usually boys 10 years or over (never girls), who at first learn the Geez-Amharic alphabet, reading Geez without translating, beginning with the Epistle of the Apostle John. They are taught by rote, memorizing by chanting the portions out loud. There is very little writing in the early grades, and experimentation is traditionally discouraged, for fear that the boys might use their new-won learning to write magic amulets. Before examinations, church studetns stimulate
874 their mental processes by eating the leaf of a Datura
276 weed resembling Jimson weed called "astänaser" (lit. to stimulate talk) which is also used by däbtära in exor-

533 same name. "Sa̤atat", the midnight chant, has a special
796 mode. "Dawit", the Psalms of David, are chanted in their characteristic mode, as is the "Addis Kidan" (New Testament).

On other occasions, not only does the musical composer have the opportunity to improvise, but the lyrical poetry, "qẽnẽ", can be varied. In rural districts, priests who can only recite Geez but not compose in it, because they don't understand it, even compose "qẽnẽ" in Amharic. For example:

[539] "How are you, earth? How are you, world?
Even though I love you (my home soil), I wish not to come.
Even if I hated you--how shall I stay away?".

This poem, chanted as part of a church service, is not strictly liturgical, varies from district to district, and can express a wide variety of philosophical emotions, including the Weltschmerz motive illustrated here. The peasants appreciate this unofficial, Amharic addition to Geez liturgy, and often mutter under their breath "Aiyye! what good words!".

(f) Heretical Movements.

795 Like any old church, the Abyssinian Coptic church has had heretical movements within it, but none of them have ever been able to split the church into sharply [illegible] sects. Instead, heretical sects seem to follow

796 selling plowpoints for the plowing that will soon begin when the light rains have softened the ground.

[262] On this Thursday, the pious begin a 3-day fast, taking only dry peas and water after the noon hour. Good Friday, called "seqlät", is on the 15th of Miyazya. Chil-
796 857 dren, too young to fast, are given special privileges of impertinence that day. (For are not all rules suspended now that the Savior himself is dying?). From sunrise on, boys and girls knock at doors of huts and houses, chanting:

[539] "Musha-musho, (nonsense rhyme, meaning lamentation, funeral chant)
we come for your crucifixion (Oh Christ);
Fill (our hands) with flour (ye women),
we are many as fleas".
Musho-musha,
May He (God) give ye fat cattle,
children in your womb;
give us gifts!"

They are given freshly-baked bread being prepared for the Easter feast, but they keep on demanding, making the most of this rare freedom, insulting and mocking the stingy hosts. They may carry an effigy corpse of the latter, as if to his funeral, weeping and lamenting his "lekso" (funeral eulogy). Some boys dress as priests, the girls imitating hysterical women relatives, until they bury him with full ceremonials on the market place, to the great amusement of the adult audience.

796 Adults on this Friday rise early for morning wor-

796 the youngest are lifted to see the parade. Boys and
[857] girls age 7 to 15 go from hut to hut starting in the early morning, chanting "Buhe, Buhe", "hoyya, hoyyo, ho", and verses:

[539] "All shout 'Buhe!, children all!
Give us what (you have) prepared; Do not change (your mind)! "

"When the rooster has crowed, night is gone;
After Buhe, the winter(rainy season) is gone".

796 Long whips, mostly of finely braided fibre, of
526 tree bark or "tucha" grass, are made before Buhe, and
[411] young men practice with them until they can hit even small targets easily. On Buhe afternoon, two groups of contestants face each other, often across a swollen brook, and line up so that each individual faces an opponent of equal skill and strength. They come armed with the whips, and begin to warm up by hurling insults at each other, addressing each other in the female gender. Soon the game of aiming at the face and ducking the adversary's whip begins. The whip has a short wooden handle, but the strap may be as long as 15 feet. Sometimes this opportunity is taken to work out grudge fights. For, traditionally, any wounds incurred, even the loss of an eye, cannot be taken to court or cause a feud, as the result of this ritual battle. No other weapons may be used. The losers flee, are pursued to their huts, and the victors are entitled to all the

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796 food of the feast prepared by the losing side.
526 In the evening "fires of joy" are lit, where the rain-drenched, weary and sore contestants and others can dry out, drink barley beer, and are supposed to forget and forgive the hostilities. Some may still boast of individual feats of heroism, in Amhara warrior style; others will sulk. But generally the day ends in harmony, after the excitement which itself was a welcome break in the monotonous hibernation of the rainy season.

796 The end of the annual cycle coincides with the end of the rainy season. The last 5 days (in leap years 6 days) are added after the end of the last month, and are called "Pagumēn" or "Ḳwagmē". On the 3rd day the
[776] annual festival of St. Raphael, called "ḳeddus Rufaēl",
[821] the water saint, takes place. The rain, which still falls heavily that day, is considered "ṭebel" (holy water)
[787] and to have the power to dull the poison of snakes so that their bites will not be fatal. Much rain during Pagumēn is taken as an omen that the crops will be good.

796 This day is final examination day for the boys
874 who have attended church school long enough to be promoted to "deacon". They are examined in correct chanting of liturgy and prayers. To be mentally wide awake they often go to the dabbara beforehand, and, for a small gift, obtain the stimulating herb "esa fars" (lit. Persian wood) or drink boiled "astänagär" (lit. the plant that makes to talk), which also helps to overcome stage-fright.

796 The younger children go from hut to hut, chanting:
857 "In the name of Rufael,
539

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796 857 [539] from the bin of peas
fill me up."

Thereupon the householder gives them a handful of shembera peas, which they roast to "qolo", and this symbol, too, is considered to invite a good crop.

796 805 The 5th or last day of Pagumen is the annual feast day of St. John. The "tabot" from his church is carried to water very early in the morning, and the men bathe in the river. The old year is symbolically buried, in some regions, by ceremonial burial of the book "Lefafa Tsedeq" (Scroll of Righteousness) which resembles in part the ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead. The day is traditionally [651] also the end of the fiscal budget year, on which the nagadras, the appointee over commerce, had to pay the feudal tribute to his lord (at least a large jar of beer and 20 enjara breads) in addition to squaring his accounts.

That evening torches are lit, for this is the beginning of a new year.

c) The Religious Life Cycle of the Lay Individual.

852 Baptism usually occurs after 40 days for boys, still later for girl babies, sometimes as long as 80 days. This practice is based on Old Testament patterns, and more directly, on the period of 40 days that the Virgin Mary herself had to segregate herself from the Temple after the birth of Jesus. (The Falasha Jews of Abyssinia is concerned less that a baby might die

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7. Family and Kinship in Social Organization.

602 The emphasis on the extended family and kin relations among the Amhara can hardly be exagerated. In all problems of life the Amhara first turns to family and kin. While the partilineal-patrilocal extended family is considered of first importance, consanguinal kinfolk on themother's side rank only slightly less in obligation and duties owed by the individual, and in benefits for which he can appeal. In contrast, affinal relationships are regarded as considerably less important [428] in obligations and benefits,. This attitude is reinforced by the traditional law which emphasized inheritance [587] in consanguineal relationships, even distant ones, over closer affinal relatives; and by the relatively easy divorce from the common "semanya" marriage.

602 539 Proverbs emphasizing various aspects of kin relations abound and are constantly cited as advice in problems, and in "socializing" and "enculturating" the young:

"The liar to win over,
to his brother and sister appeal",

(i.e., do not appeal to the judge, whom the liar may fool; but to his siblings, whom he cannot fool).

"Quarrels within the kinfolk,
(are like) insects on cabbage",

(i.e. they do not strike at the root, are not really destructive).

"Relatives and medicine,
in days of trouble seek them."

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602
539 "When kinfolk aid each other,
no trouble can sever them".

"The needle does not see her own hole
yet it serves her so well",

(said of a man, who, as is common, is generous to his brothers and sisters, yet stingy to his wife and even children).

"When the nose is hit,
the eye begins to weep",

(i.e when one relative is hurt, the others suffer with him).

602 Kin relations give the individual his greatest source of security, psychological and economic, to the Amhara mind, and protect him from the world outside.
[574] Therefore, regular and frequent visiting of kinfolk is emphasized; it is one of the most frequent causes of absentiism of Amhara employees. Events of the life cycle (marriages, memorial feasts, etc.) require such visiting. The end of the rainy season is another stimulus. No other association seriously challenges the predominance of kin relations in Amhara society.

A. The Extended Family and Kinship Terms.

596 The extended patrilocal, patrilineal family usually inhabits its own hamlet, farms its own land, allocating it to its biological-nuclear families. Patriarchal elders form an informal council that can be convened in any case of need. This extended family is most typically found among owners of "rest" land

608 be the "mother's" barrenness, or a man's wish to be
597 taken care of in his old age, or both. Obversely, an adolescent orphan may himself take the initiative in selecting a prospective breast-parent, attaching himself to him, ingratiating himself with gifts of honey, etc. After adoption, the "breast-child" is literally considered like a blood relative, and may not marry his new "sibling" -by-adoption.

This prohibition does not apply to the "bread-parent" relation. A bread-father ("anjära abbat"), and bread-mother ("enjära ennat") are considered not truly "artificial kinship" of permanence. It is a step-parent relationship, arising out of divorce and remarriage of parents, or a man's last will asking a close friend to take care of his children, in war or famine, or sickness. Youngsters do not often take the initiative to establish this relationship, for it does not usually provide the security of the breast-parenthood. The proverb says:

● [539] "Bread-mother, what will move you?
(you are tough) like a gut!".

608 Another, mild, form of artificial kinship is established to give security and guarantee against ill-treatment to the bride, in the persons of the "mizë", two kinsmen of the groom who take an oath to regard and protect her like a sister in her new residential hamlet.

In the broadest sense, kinfolk also includes the retainer, usually a landless peasant, who has pla-

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608 ced himself under the protection of a landowning kin group, and injuries inflicted on him thereupon can lead to a blood feud as much as if he were a consanguinal relative.

All these attempts to establish artificial kinship are motivated by the attitude that kinship, even at geographical distance, is greater security than close relations with neighbors even of the same district. The proverb says:

[539] "Your (home) country, where is it?
(It is) Mary's water. (i.e. the womb).
You are my kinfolk!"

8. Attitudes based on Social Stratification

56 Social stratification among the Amhara, as has been shown, is based on land tenure and feudal relations between nobles and peasants; on the temporal as well as spiritual power of the Coptic Abyssinian church; on the ethnic division of skilled labor; on the conquest of border areas and the past subjugation of other ethnic and racial groups; to a lesser degree on age and sex.

565 184 Analysis of the human relations and attitudes arising out of this social stratification can be expressed in terms of class; sometimes approaching caste, because very little social mobility has been "open" to ethnic specialists in skilled labor and to

565 ("chäwa") of Amhara ancestry ("attentam"); and the "gabbar" sharecropper on feudal land, who is regarded as of doubtful ancestry (part-slave, or part-Galla ethnic), who is referred to as "rustic" ("balagär). While the former, usually descended from warriors who were given land many generations age, considers himself inferior only to nobility and higher church officials, the latter occupies the broad bottom base of the Amhara social pyramid. The proverb says of the rustic "gabbar":

● [539] "He who honors a gabbar
will be despised by him ".

In fact there are not many who might honor a gabbar, except for some ethnic laborers and ex-slaves, both of whom occupy somewhat of an outcast position.

c) The Ethnic Classes

563 463 565 The ethnic skilled-labor class does not usually consider itself inferior to the gabbar class. This is especially true if the particular ethnic group has a non-material culture or subculture of its own, notably the Falashas who observe Mosaic Judaism.

The factor of fear of a skilled occupation, the practitioners of which are called "täbib" (lit. "knowing one ", i.e to whom secrets are revealed), enters into the class stratification. It attaches an aura of untouchability to certain occupational classes, especially if reinforced by ethnic or religious difference. 563 326 754 This combination of factors applies to the smithcraft, the "mayla", who are suspected of witchcraft, of being

557 565 household both in rural areas or towns, also to do plowing for the freehold farmer and help in the harvest. Servants are usually permanently employed, and therefore do not usually leave even if the employer is behind in his monthly wage payments. Salary and food are received with a bow and cupped hands. The servant addresses the master with the extra polite "gētoch" (lit. masters, i.e. plural), walks in front of the master's mule to make way, slightly behind him when both are on foot, and never lets his master carry anything.

Long interpersonal relations usually improve the position of the servant to master, and it is not in the servant's interest to change jobs, or to go to another area where he is unknown. A landless "gabbar" may try to attach himself to a well-to-do household as "retainer ("zēga"), without wages, doing a servant's work in the hope of occasional, seasonal gifts, a share of the produce, or, in town, a share in trade. For, a servant or retainer who is Amhara "attentam" and Coptic Christian becomes like a member of the extended family. The proverb says:

[539] "When (women) grind (grain) together,
there is no mistress".

556 565 Economic wealth enables each of these social classes to achieve some upward social mobility, within limits. But there are not many opportunities to accumulate much wealth. Traders can raise their status [441] in towns, despite doubful ancestry. The same is true 294 565 of tailors, a very recent occupation in town, where foot-operated Singer sewing machines have enabled men

294 to set up shops along the main street leading to the
565 market, or at the market itself, manufacturing khaki shorts and jackets. But this is still considered shameful manual labor by the Amhara, so that he will pursue it only in another province where it does not shame his kinfolk.

556 A rich man, whose low ancestry may be whispered behind his back, is nevertheless usually treated with honor by Amhara commoners. The proverb says:

[539] "He who falls in a shallow place"
hurt will not come to him", (i.e. a rich man, even if he falls drunk in a gutter, will not be molested by ruffians, who will instead take him to his house, expecting a reward).

[539] "The water of (the rainy month) Mahasse is good,
yet no one will drink it;
the word of the poor man may be fruitful,
but no one will listen to him" (i.e.he is not appreciated, no matter how wise).

B. Age Stratification.

561 Age stratification among the Amhara ranks in emphasis between class stratification and sex stratification.

561 The social relation of old toward the young is
882 often likened by the Amhara to that of master to servant. Indeed, a young man between puberty and marriage is addressed as "ashkär", (lit. servant). A young girl of the same age is addressed and even referred to as "lejä wädäd"(lit. servant maid, handmaiden).

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561 The functions of the young literally follow these
282 terms. Even boys attending church school do pasturing of the flock before and after their lessons, and school is recessed during plowing and harvesting seasons. Elder brothers may and do discipline their juniors, despite the superficial "joking relationship" between siblings of the same sex. As "ashkär", the young bachelor is constantly at the beck and call of his father and other elders of the extended family. At feasts, the father may show affectionate approval by feeding his son hand-to-mouth, the "gursha", also given to servants and other social inferiors.

The proverb admonishes the young man to respect age, and family patriarchs watch jealously a personal friendship developing between any young man with another outside the family:

[539] "More than a trusted companion, who is unlearned, the old teacher is better".

561 Age stratification outranks sex stratification even in matters of religion. An old woman is sometimes permitted to enter the church building, especially if she [565] has taken vows as a nun and wears the "qob". Though the church would like to promote it, social attitudes criticize as ostentatious a young couple of undistinguished, commoner ancestry, who marry by "qurban" (eucharistic marriage) and wear the bright metal crown("aklil"). But a middle-aged couple, long married by "semanya", may take this honorable step without being criticized.

562 "The killer? (It was) your husband;
602 The victim? (It was) your brother.
[539] Great is your pain,
never will it leave your house"
(said to a woman who promoted her husband's interests, e.g. in competition for a position with the feudal lord, over that of her brother).

562 Psychological inferiority is ascribed to all women, by Amhara men, regardless of social rank. Her weakness is regarded as biological, intellectual and moral. It is regarded as proverbial:

[98] "Vulgar Language" - "yäsyēt qwanqwa" (lit. woman's language)
"Polite Language" - "yäwänd qwanqwa" (lit. man's language); modest, correct, pure, elegant language. Also called "yäwond amarenā" (lit. man's Amharic).

[195] "syeto" - insult to a talkative man. (lit. womanish
"syētē" - (lit. female) - said of timber or soil that is feeble, soft, of little resistance.

[539] "Woman and donkey
(must be trained) with á stick."

"Even if a woman has knowledge,
(only a) man knows how to hold on to it."

1. The Beginning of Life.

842 A. The Desire for Children: adoption.

Children are greatly desired by the Amhara, and a childless home is regarded as under a heavenly curse. Children are regarded as continuing the "byet", the residential extended family; as a source of riches from childhood on when they begin economic tasks; as a source of comfort and security in old age; as defenders in feuds and wars; even after the death of parents, children help them into heaven by means of "täzkar".

[588] When a woman is barren, and amulets have proven no cure for her, she may give her husband a concubine, "gäräd" (lit. servant maid), so that he will not feel deprived of fatherhood and begin

597 to hate her. Or she may adopt a child, preferably an orphan of kinfolk or a well-known family, by taking the child to the confessor-priest and swearing the oath of ecclesiastical adoption, whereupon the child becomes "yägal kidan lej" (lit. contract-child). This may include the ceremony of "breast-mother", "yätut ennat", previously described. Less fortunate is the foster child, not formally adopted, who lives with the foster parents, guards the crops and herds the cows, but is more completely dependent on the good will of the "bread mother", "enjära ennat".

593 Fathers, whether natural or adopted, expect complete obedience from their children, particularly after they have arrived at the "age of reason". Fathers feel defensively obliged to maintain their authority; as the proverbs say of a father addressing the

593 son:

539

"Sheep! If I do not eat you, you would devour me", said the hyena". (meaning: perhaps you'd

593
539 like to order me about?).

"He who talks before his father does,
his mouth will become like that of a leper".

Older brothers may discipline younger siblings, but there is less emphasis on the privileges of the first-born than in Arab countries. The Amhara is aware that younger brothers may often become more honored, richer and wiser later in life:

539 "Formerly, he (the older) pulled his (the younger's) ear, later on, the horn of the other (the younger) became bigger".

586 In case of divorce, which is frequent, children not staying with one of the parents are quickly taken by kinfolk. Thus, children are often raised by their grandparents, paternal or maternal, who often are young enough to have small children of their own. It is not even rare to see children of a divorcee by her first marriage may be raised by the family of her second husband even after she has divorced and left him also. This is more likely to happen in a town, where the consanguinal kin ties are weakened due to absence of the factor of kin residence, than in the residential kin hamlet. (Foreign observers have paraphrased an old English saying and adapted it to this situation in Abyssinia:

B. Pregnancy, Birth, Circumcision.

842 843 According to popular observation, 25% of all women, especially in the towns, are barren, and another 25% have frequent miscarriages. There are many precautions taken against these mishaps. A pregnant woman may wear extra cowrie shells, "gagol"; in addition to amulets written against the evil spirit "tela" (lit. shadow, an envious female spirit) which brings miscarriages, kills babies at

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304 852 Although Amhara often deny the religious aspect of their circumcision, it is recalled by the more learned that Jesus Christ was circumcized on the 6th day of the month Ter. Also, the confessor is invited to circumcisions, and blesses the baby, sprinkles the hut with blessed water, waves the cross about to exorcise lingering demons who have waited for the kill like vultures. He blesses the entire family; May God rear up the baby for you, that he be your support in old age, and carry you to your burial". He is rewarded with a small feast and as much barley beer as he can drink.

In some regions of Begemdir province girl babies undergo clitorectomy, performed without ceremony by the midwife, without any religious connotation. Usually the operation is a simple cut, a "clitorotomy". The purpose is to prepare the girl baby for future marital happiness by reducing the egotistical part of [831] her sensuality. It is believed that Amhara women of the province of Gojjam, where clitorectomy is not practiced, are very difficult to satisfy sexually, that they are more concerned with their own sexual gratification than with that of their husbands', and even become unfaithful because of this. At least this is the belief of Amhara of Begemdir province. The term "wäshäla" is also used for an "uncircumcised" woman.

845 It is considered a great calamity when twins are born. They are referred to as "bänta" (from "amänäta", undecided, not knowing which to accept). Everyone wonders "who will feed and carry the twin"? The proverb says: 845 539

"The mother of twins,

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845 (because of what she carries) on her
[539] back, she dies."

It would indeed be difficult for her to suckle two babies for two years, and to carry them on her back while fetching water and deadwood and doing all her other chores. Very likely, the weaker of twins is neglected, which greatly increases the higher natural mortality of twins. The observable fact is that one never seems to encounter adult Amhara twins.

C. Naming the Baby.

553 Since Amhara fathers pay little attention to details concerning the unweaned baby, the task of naming the baby, giving it the "world name", usually falls to the mother. She does not usually prepare a name during pregnancy. Instead, she awaits the momentuous event of birth, then decides on a name based on her predominant emotion at that time, or on a significant event occurring at the same time, or on the special wish she has for the personality or the future of her baby. All classes follow this practice, but among nobles there is an additional pattern of naming the baby after a deceased ancestor, particularly in the direct patrilineal line.

557 Common "world names" given by mothers include:

Boys

"Taamrat" - (lit. miracle), e.g. if the mother barely survived the parturition, or some other miraculous deliverance took place.

"Mällässä" - (lit. he returned), e.g. if the baby's father had been away, and the mother was overjoyed to see him return just at the time the baby was born.

855 Neglect of duty is therefore punished, and a father may fly into a sudden rage, beat the child without waiting for an excuse, even hurl a firebrand at the offending boy, so that considerable injuries sometimes occur. Mothers discipline the girls in similar temperamental fashion. But the rage, in either case, is quickly forgotten. There is no pattern of cold discipline, no "woodshed" punishment, rather hot-tempered, quick retribution.

857 Play activity and imitation of adults continues, but it takes on more seasonal and constructive characteristics. This is partly due to the seasonal pattern of the economic activities of boys age 7 to 11 and girls 5 to 14. Formal education in church school rarely begins before 11 in the rural areas, whereupon their play activities become more "extra-curricular".

[526] The seasonal games include the ball game after the harvest is completed, known as "gencheb" or "kwas", and seasonal construction and repair activities. On the church feast of Mikael, little boys have their own outdoor party, eating barley roasted on the stalk, and watching the flirtatious play of adolescent boys and girls.

291 Boys 7 to 11 still wear the tattered, knee length cotton shift, as their basic garment in rural areas, but beg a new one from relatives once a year, for the holy day of "Mäsgal", or "Timqät". But they are increasingly self-conscious about nudity, and if the tattered shift reveals the putic area, other boys will haze and playfully beat the offender, saying:

[539] "My father told me not to let a snake warm itself in the sun".

855 In summary, parental discipline in this age group is specific,
867 work-oriented and intermittent; while experimentation with, and

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855 socialization by the peer group continues more regularly and fre-
867 quently and on a broader range of activities.

C. Training through the Peer-group; Patterns of Hazing.

867 Parental training during childhood is minimal, and much of enculturation is left to the peer-group which proceeds to function in little-structured fashion, largely through hazing.

Differential behavior of the sexes is largely taught this way. Little boys haze any boy who cries, or seems soft, "geltan", by darkly hinting that he "lacks something" ("täqmattälä"); and, if he is shy in talking and defending himself with his sharp tongue, "qëmtalla", effeminate. To prove their physical bravery, boys burn scars ("täsasa") in their own forearms, saying that this will make them "strong", and believing that this will immunize them from showing pain or softness in public. An aggressive, clever
[562] tongue, capable of a wide repertoire of insults that will shatter the adversary's composure, and also include appropriate milder and semi-strong insults, is regarded as male behavior, as "strong" or stronger than brawn. This makes a "known man" ("yätäwäqa säw"). The proverb says:

[539]

> "The son of man, by what is he respected?
> by his seat (position)?
> Not by his seat -
> by his lip. (i.e. cleverness in argument)".

Boys are hazed by other boys for picking on little girls. Hazing is sometimes physical, sometimes by mockery, often both. If physical, it consists of shoving, wrestling, in spontaneous manner, almost never with cold formality. A boy who wants to grow up too fast beyond his peers, i.e. by showing too much preference for the company of elders, is criticized with the proverb:

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867
[539] "He, before becoming old,
wants to be serious".

(This is also said of a young man who saves gifts for a bride before he has chosen a girl).

When the adolescent boys take part in the aforementioned ritual mock-battles, younger boys imitate them by staging similar hazing-battles among their age peers.

Little girls are encultured in somewhat similar fashion by peers of their own sex, but more often including some older girls who patronize the younger. Girls are not taught any social graces among commoner Amharas, so that they sit shyly and wordless when in the company of men. Any girl who shows signs of daring is mocked and hazed as "gobba" (daring, enterprising female). Generally the activities of girls are less vident,. At times when boys fight their ritual mock-battles, girls dance rounds and sing in unison.

Both boys and girls are taught to be right-handed, and a
[264 "lefty" is extremely rare. They are taught to eat with the right
576] hand, shake hands with the right, and use the left for wiping
514 themselves with leaves after defecating. But the prohibition against use of the left hand on other occasions is not as severe as among Arabs.

[754] Both sexes fear the supernatural "buda" spirit, also in the shape of human sorcerer and magical hyena. Older boys claim they can distinguish the cry of a real hyena from that of a magical one, and sometimes scare younger children by imitating the howl.

867
302 Sex differentiation among children is expressed in the hair style. Boys wear a single coxcomb hairlock, girls a ring of hair around the shaven skull which sometimes may contain a center hair-

857 grumble, growl, snarl). It consists of a stick of wood, a foot
524 long, 1/2 inch thick, notched at the thinner end, to which a cord of twisted fibre is attached. This is swung horizontally, above the head, to produce what is regarded as a terrifying sound. It is even used in shepherding, since boys believe it frightens away hyenas and the occasional leopard. During the rainy season, boys play it indoors to amuse each other and haze-tease younger siblings, who are frightened by it.

At the beginning of the light rainy season, when the storks and other birds fly north, children especially girls, form circles and dance rounds, chanting to the flocks of birds:

[539]

"Stork, our country is well;
the woman who baked <u>gitta</u> (luxuricus wheat bread)
has died swallowing <u>gitta</u> (i.e. luxury is plentiful).

[825] At harvest time, in November, similar greetings are sung to the birds when they return from the north, from "Jerusalem" in popular belief. The Falashas children express this by singing to departing storks:

[539]

"How are you?
The people of Jerusalem (Falashas) are well)."

The Coptic Amhara hold the same belief as to the destination of the birds.

Winter games, i.e. in the rainy season, when children are restricted to the hamlet, include building of makeshift huts, in which they play "man and wife". The girls gather leaves, roll red mud inside, and "bake" cakes. Boys mimic the farmer, weave a hood of reeds, and just as he walks in the rain broadcasting his seeds, so boys broadcast pebbles.

Swimming is a favorite sport of children in the rainy season,

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883 pasturing, housebuilding, packing and unpacking of mules on trips to the market and caravans. Able-bodied and semi-skilled, he is at the beck and call of any male kinsman, whenever the call "antä gobäz" (thou, warrior) resounds.

882 But he is still considered "half-baked", not fully skilled, strong but not wise, capable of carrying out orders but not of giving them because impatient and unable to foresee all consequences. The proverbs say:

[539] "The heart of the gobäz is in his chest" (meaning he is brave but does not reflect, in his head, the consequences of his deeds).

"A village full of young men
in one year it will become a desert".

"A young chief;
fog in (the month of) Hedar; (harvest month in dry season) (both) ruin the country".

[583] In return for his services, the young man hopes that his father will be generous in allocating a large and fertile plot of land to him upon marriage; also many cows, so he can ask an equal number from the bride's family.

883 In these services, particularly in transportation of goods and in housebuilding, he may be working in a team with other young men, his former playmates. But having is rare at this stage and considered childish, as is unrestrained shouting and pushing, especially within sight and hearing of full adults.

882 Sexual activities after puberty are much more secretive than
831 before, go on at night rather than in daytime, and are discussed only in whispers. Puberty is called" akalä mätän därrësä (lit. he

584 about the economic arrangements to which both sides contribute equally, for "honor"; for setting up the couple on a sound economic basis; and to assure property to the bride in case of divorce or widowhood. "Semanya" marriage among Amhara usually begins on an economic basis of half-and-half ("bal ekkul") contributions from both kin groups. The kinsmen of the bride would be ashamed to accept more of dowry (macha) for her than they are able to contribute, lest she be treated disrespectfully by the groom's kinfolk later on who might say: "She was bought like a "damoz", whenever there is a wuarrel. For there is no lobola custom in the one-sided African way. Conversely, a man who marries for cows is mocked:

[539] "Seeing her cattle, he married a bad one;
when the cattle died,
his trouble was double".

583 Cows are usually the major item of discussion of property changing hands at marriage. Negotiations finally fix the number of cows each will contribute ("kabetesh bakabte") (lit. "your property is mine"), usually payable gradually as down payment and in installments, as a further guarantee that the marriage is working out and that there are no complaints (e.g. that the bride actually proved to be a virgin as promised).

Even a poor peasant will try to beg and borrow among his kin, lest he be shamed, so that he can match the dowry of the in-laws with 3 to 5 cows. A rich farmer may give as many as 30 cows to his child, thus requiring the in-laws to match this. A stubborn father can use this means to discourage a match that his youngster has set his heart on; knowing full well that the in-laws, if not rich

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584 tiations are concluded, preparations are made to ensure the spiritual and emotional well-being of the couple. A bridegroom is warned to study the character of his prospective mother-in-law, for it is believed that her daughter will take after her:

"Observe her mother,
before you let the daughter enter (the house)."

584 608 But the importance of the sworn best men, the "mizē", in protecting the bride after the marriage, is considered even more important, due to the patrilocal residence. They are called the protectors of her "teeth and arms", ready to rush to her aid even against the husband when she shouts for help. On the other hand, to balance the situation, they are chosen from among the groom's closest relatives, e.g. first cousins (patrilineal), so that they won't be likely to seduce the girl. The two "mize" have to take the vow of excommunication before the "mänfäs gubaē" (lit. soul counsel) priest, in front of the parents of the girl and the groom, that they will regard her as a sister, that they will treat her as their own sisters, that they will come night or day when she calls. This formal, literal bond of artificial kinship is strong, and the bride affectionately addresses the "mize" as "gashey" (lit. my shield, i.e. by protector) much as she would an uncle or other grown kinsman. The proverb says:

539 "For confession - go to the priest,
for (selfless) love - go to the mize".

These "mize" become protectors not only of the bride, but, in consequence, of the marriage of the couple. For, if the groom needs a "was", a personal guarantor-bondsman for employment or if in legal trouble, the mize can hardly refuse this service as they are now doubly bound. The mize pattern thus increases security and stability

184 instead of barley-beer, and the best of available meat dishes.
585 In return, the wealthier guests are expected to leave larger cash gifts as they leave. It is in this tent that the "semanya" marriage is performed, and the bridal couple blessed by the "mänfas gubaé" priest, who will later watch over their marriage. His blessing is the same as that in the rural hamlet:

539

> "May God make you capable of begetting, of conception, for office-holding, for honor,
> for the communion and the flesh of the Lord.
> May God guide you to truth and make you kin with
> Abraham and Sarah".

Though the bride in town may be called out from the women's tent, and thus be the only female eating with the men, seated next to the groom, they still act shy with each other in public. Men like to believe that, though there are no tears in public, brides weep silently, out of fear; - the "vanquished sex". But the groom does not yet patronize her in public with the "gursha", hand to mouth feeding, as he will starting some weeks after.

c) Post-Wedding Adjustments and Kin Relations.

585 After the traditional rural wedding, the "dass" remains standing for a week, in both the groom's and the bride's hamlets, to shelter visitors. After two full days of marriage have passed, the mize go to the bride's hamlet to report on her well-being, adjustment and good treatment. They are feted and sleep in the "dass". The next day they return, carrying an invitation to the bridal couple and a specified number of companions (which is usually exceeded!) to come to the bride's hamlet for a 3-day visit, the "mäla".

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585 [574] Three-day visiting is the pattern in kin visiting, for it usually takes one day for initial greetings and exchange of news, slaughtering and preparation of a sheep; a second day for feasting and talks with the neighbors; a third day for preparation of leave-taking.

After one week, the "dass" are torn down. A "great man" who is father of the bride, will usually send his daughter several donkeyloads of household staples, including lentils ("shuro"), peas cooked with salt, pepper, and spices, so that she will be honored and well treated by the women under whose jurisdiction she has come. Then, after a month, he will send a messenger to ask how she is habituated to the new life. If the reply is favorable, another load of grain, butter, spices, flaxseed oil are sent.

512 The adjustment of the bride may not be easy. The night she leaves her parental roof, she takes with her, besides her skin-mat, a little basket of dyed reeds, containing her personal little distaff, spindle, and glass necklace used in scouring pottery. After a week or a few weeks of honeymoon, she is expected to participate in the women's household tasks: fetching water and fuel, baking "enjara" daily for her husband, cooking "wot", to her husband's tastes, crushing barley, grinding "tyeff", brewing beer. If she complains too soon, the womenfolk will quote the proverb:

● [539]

"Hardly arrived have you, young bride,
(but) already you crunch shembera (peas)"
(meaning: lazily pick at peas, instead of
doing the regular, harder work).

606 [591] The couple is expected to remain in patrilocal residence at least a year, so that the bride can be taught, by her mother-in-law, how

888 792 young, "not-yet-serious" young woman, partly because there is no career involved, as there is in case of young men who become monks. Though there are usually fewer widows then widowers (due to the mortality in connection with childbirth), the lot of a widow is not a happy one. The proverb says:

[539]

"Now that my fortune (husband) has died,
what will my mother-in-law give me?"

888 735 [792] Without the kin group, an aging man, especially if sick, blind or crippled, has little protection. The church is not eager to have him as a monk, for it can recruit younger men for its service, as a career, and an old man is much less useful in the churchyard than an old woman. He may, especially if landless, or in town, be reduced to beggary. There he sits at the approaches to the churches, repeating his demanding, ceaseless litany: "Sela Medhane Alam, sela Maryam, sela Givorgis" (For sake of the Savior, of Mary, of St. George), stretching out an open hand. Sometimes he may send out a child to beg for him, either because he is too bashful, or is using it as a technique. Little boys will thus attach themselves to a potential donor, repeating "babba, babba" (babytalk for "daddy"). [608] They have already learned the concept of artificial kinship to establish human relationships.

5. The End of Life: Eulogy; Memorial Services and Feasts.

763 When an elder is close to death, other elders from among his nearest kin come with his confessor, and say to him: "Confess yourself". When he has done so, they ask him for his last will: "What do you give to your children, and for your soul (i.e. to the church, through the confessor, to the poor)". While fields and cattle are given to the descendants, (the former only in patrilineal descent), personal belongings such as cowhide mats, chamma

538 He was a master of "sowasso"; of the pun which utilizes gemina-
522 tion and other grammatical possibilities to make an ironic observation and befuddle the unwary, so that they become public laughing stocks. Sometimes the joke was on his own Rabelaisian appetites in food and sex. More often he spoofed the pompousness of feudal and even royal powers, their love for amassing rules and regulations for their courts; and the pretended puritan piety of the priests, behind which facade he recognized witty insight into the minds of men, whose salty comments and behavior in private life he liked to burlesque. For example:

[539] "One day the servant of a witty priest suffered from a chigger (sandflea) embedded in his foot. The priest pried it out with a pin and threw it into the fire. A friend, watching this, objected jokingly, saying: "Why did you do this? May it not multiply in the fire?" Replied the priest: "It may be warmed, but not 'done up' ("yäzaräw" - also means begotten through sexual intercourse)."

Amhara listeners find such "impolite" stories extremely amusing.

195 The Amhara people recognize the esoteric use that can be made of
198 their language, and they utilize this. Hence the expression "he is talking Amarinya", meaning "he is speaking in esoteric ways", with double meanings, hidden meanings, to becloud his real purpose so that he cannot be accused of lying and can say later that he meant something else. For example, the verb "qanna" can have the following meanings:

was right, direct, correct
was honest, just
succeeded, prospered
became jealous, envious
became zealous, fanatic, intolerant.

198 Certain occupational specialties have traditionally made use of

574
576 visitors screw up their faces as if in great agony, even despair, and utter the long, subdued wail "ayye". Religious expressions on such occasions are "egziabhēr yatnawo" (May God give you health), or "egzer yemarewo" (May God be merciful to you).

574
539 d) Hospitality and Dining.

Hospitality to kinfolk, members of the secondary group, and other travellers, in that sequence of emphasis, is a major culture focus. Numerous proverbs are often quoted, governing this behavior:

Even a poor man is expected to give what he can, even if he can offer little more than a pleasant face:

"More than his food,
his face pleased me."

Refusal of hospitality for the night is castigated:

"He has let me be eaten by the hyena" (at night).

A stingy host, who could well afford generosity, is mocked:

"He goes about, attended by 90 retainers;
but in his house famine reigns".

A host is advised to make his invitation specific as to the day:

"A dog, called for the right day,
arrives on his own feet".

574
262 A host is expected to urge the guest to take freely of profferred food and drink. An invitation to "take coffee" is frequently the formula introducing a complete dinner. Staples readily available, unlike dinners that require preparation, include barley beer ("tilla"), roasted barley grains ("qebs qolo"), roasted peas ("shembera qolo"), boiled corn grains ("mashella"), milk, eggs, limp bread ("enjara"), and except among the very poor, coffee beans, which are roasted, crushed and boiled in front of the guest.

Dinner is regarded as a feast ("dorgee" or "gebber") and should include meat and butter, so that it is impolite to invite anyone on

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574 262 Wednesday or Friday when no animal products can be consumed; the months of lent also interrupt the frequency of visiting.

To honor a "great man" ("telleq säw") the host presents him with a live sheep, select, with a heavy tail, then has it slaughtered and cooked in a spicy and peppery sauce ("wot"). In place of barley beer he will offer honeywater ("berz") or even honeymead ("täj"); the bread will be served smeared with spiced butter. A poor man, forced to substitute chicken for sheep, can at least indicate that he honors the guest by giving him the choice morsel - the wing: The proverb says:

[539]

"The chicken wing

joy brings to the face".

264 Etiquette in eating follows these procedures: The hands are washed prior to consuming bread or meat though often with not very clean, muddy river water poured from a clay pot); and washed again after the meal to remove pepper stains of the "bärbare wot" from the fingers, lest absentminded rubbing of the eye cause painful stinging. Only the right hand is used in eating, for the left is used in the toilet. The right hand is used to rip off a piece of the limp "enjära", dip it into the meat stew, close the piece of pancake-like bread around some morsel and fish it out for immediate consumption. A knife is used only when eating "brundo" (raw beef), at a special feast, to cut off a piece held between the teeth (now, at city feasts, brundo is served pre-sliced into cubes).

Noisy eating ("gorädimä") is permitted in the old tradition as indicative of he-man behavior, but smacking of lips and ceremonial belching, though not criticized, are not emphasized. It is an old custom of Amhara hosts, still followed in rural areas, to pour a mouthful of a prefferred drink into their own cupped hands and consume it, before passing the cup to the honored guest or "great man" ("ejun däggno ätta"- lit. he received (cup) with hands (under chin) and drank). This

576 Very Polite: "shango witta" - (lit. he went to a meeting).

514 Extremely Polite: "mwaro zorä" - (lit. he left home).

192 Extremely Polite: "shersher watta" - (lit. he went for a walk).

522 Wit, used in court or by homespun philosophers to entertain their friends, compensates for the many formalities in this culture and society. The famous wit, Alïqa Gäbre-Hanna has already been cited. 538 Proverbs, "tarät" and riddles may be used to make a comment of esoteric meanings, understandable only to one's initiates. Proverbs fulfill a social function, beyond mere entertainment, for even philosophy, being utilized to begin any negotiation, such as for marriage. This is emphasized in proverbs on proverbs:

[539] "Like Halleluyah before the chanting (in church),
(begin with) a proverb before the discussion".
"(to drink) mead, (first get) a container,
to talk, (begin with) a proverb".

538 593 [861] Proverbs and riddles used by parents, teachers and leaders of society have a pedagogic function, and can be used to reprimand and instruct. Conflict between father and son, the complexities involved, and the possibility that contrary to the major cultural assumption of parental superiority, the son may sometimes have logic on his side, is indicated by the following:

[539] "(Says the father):

"Your Father you cannot accuse (e.g. in court, shaming yourself)
nor plow the sky,
nor roast water".

"(Replies the son):

"The father, by his own shame he will stand accused;
the sky, by lightning it is plowed;
water, in a pot it is steamed".

524 Boys, from the "age of reason" onward, tease each other with riddles in endless inventive games, such as:

539 "(Question)": "In its youth, white hair,
in its maturity, brown,
in its old age, red.
What is it?"

"(Reply)": "Wot". (Red-golden peppersauce).

538 Like medieval bards, Amhara entertainers (amari) and talented individuals tell of incredible and wonderful happenings of all kinds, stories called "tarik" (synonymous, in Amharic, with history). Often these use as their base historical or pseudo-historical events, and expand on them, experimenting with persons, plots, additional details, etc. Very popular bases are the Royal Chronicles of Abyssinia, "tarik nägäst", fanciful stories about Alexander the Great, and Biblical plots, especially Apocryphal.

I. Artistic Expression: The Art of Insult and Mockery.

195 578 A person who is clever at the art of insult is given grudging admiration even by his opponents, and is called "särfalacy lachi" (lit. one who shaves with his tongue). He can insult or mock so subtly that he may leave non-initiates in doubt, yet have full effect on the victim. On the other hand, a coarse person who insults people indiscriminately, regardless of propriety of person or circumstance, is despised ("särta af").

Mockery is sometimes used for positive as well as negative purposes, especially in pedagogy, but insults are always more or less negative. Mockery, if used to teach a lesson, often employs proverbs; 578 other metaphors, so that the person criticized must think - which 195 might lead to his mending his ways:

537 To teach a useless adult: "(It is like) a comb on a shaven head," [like] trousers to carry water in".

578
195 To mock false pride: 515

[539] "A blind man, when he became (too) proud, (to accept help)
on his toga defecated".

To mock aggressiveness beyond social station, especially in a young man:

"The mouse that wants to die,
goes to touch the nose of the cat".

Insults, however, do not have this benevolent, educative quality. Instead, they are antagonistic - though in carefully differentiated degrees. In general, an insult may be extremely severe, severe, medium severe, or light, in degree. Insults are considered of greater weight when directed at persons of higher status, (more severe).

There are two major categories of insults:

a) Insults directed at the group to which the insulted person belongs: his racial (usually slave-descent); religious (non-Coptic); ethnic (linguistic-regional) stereotype.

b) Insults directed at his individual personality shortcomings, intended to shame him for having failed to measure up to what is expected of him in society.

Racial insults commonly include:

"shembora ras" (lit. peahead, i.e. peppercorn hair) or "barya tägur" (slave hair), both severe insults referring to slave ancestry, by reference to hair typical of the Shanqallä (negroid tribe in the border lowland). This is now a jail offense.

"täqwara" (lit. dark one). Light insult directed at Shanqalla ex-slave, teasingly.

"xellaj" (half-slave). Severe insult directed at a person of doubtful ancestry.

Religious insults; often involved also in ethnic insults:

"täfotam" (lit. sheathed, encased) - uncircumcised. Directed at "pagan" lowlanders, and lower ethnic castes such as the "Faqi" tanners. Medium severe.

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Stupidity:

"dänqworo"(lit. deaf). Fool. Frequently used. Medium to severe.

"dengay ras" (lit. stone head). Slow-witted person. Light insult if directed at a youngster, medium toward low-prestige adult, severe toward other adult males.

Laziness:

"zefeq" - Medium severe insult, directed at woman who evades her chores, and who dresses in her best embroidered toga on a weekday.

Hypocrisy:

"zembam ïeba" (lit. thief with eyes full of flies): Directed at cunning man who pretends not to see but looks out to take what he should not; like a "blind" thief in the night. Medium severe.

"wälratta" - vain flatterer, good-for-nothing. Severe insult.

Bastard:

"nem abbatu" (lit. who is his father). Very frequently used especially by lower class, even against balky mules to "let off steam", but nevertheless considered very severe insult.

Crossness:

"yahanus fetrat" (lit. Creature of Thursday; i.e. the day the animals were created). Directed at animal-like behavior. Severe insult.

Supernatural insult:

"zänänan" - full of evil spirits. Severe insult.

Insults of category a) may lead to serious brawls, even kin feuds, for insults against the group are regarded as affecting also the following generations:

"(If the father is hated), the child will not be kissed, when he (the child) speaks, no one will smile".

195
578 Insults of category b) however, may be noisy, sound violent, involve much high-pitched repartee, with the adversaries screaming at each other. But since such individual insults are regarded as a "battle of wits", they rarely even lead to fisticuffs, though, to foreign observers, such encounters seem only a hair's breadth removed from serious bloodshed, and the adversaries seem to lean against each other physically (though now actually). For, even a severe insult is not regarded as a "fighting word", rather as an almost theatrical, almost ceremonial exchange. There may be much waving of a corner of a toga in the opponent's face, as in court. The exchange may end in mutual exhaustion, physically and nervously. The entertainment aspect is not lost on the onlookers, who thoroughly enjoy this and egg on
[692] the adversaries. Sometimes curbstone arbitrators ("astaraqi") are appointed to act as "peacemakers".

[554] A person of nobility is not supposed to engage in such public battles of insult, rather employs subtle means of implied antagonism. Even a commoner Amhara may imitate the indirect behavior pattern in a situation of antagonism, e.g. to indicate to a neighbor that he is not wanted, yet without letting the public know it (thus saving face for the neighbor). He may invite him, greet him politely, ask him to wait (standing) while stools "will be brought". When no stools are brought, after some time, the neighbor leaves, never to return. The proverb says:

[539] "So that he will not talk (against us), invite him;
(yet) so that he will not eat, move him about".

In this manner, polite antagonism is indicated, without making a public enemy.

275 is served with it. Traders and travellers often stop by during the day,
487 and the place usually closes not long after sundown.

275 The barley-beer house ("talla byet") is still fairly respectable
487 for people of commoner and lower classes, but not for respected elders
265 or priests. It is operated by women, either matronly married women or "unattached girls", i.e. divorcees. It serves not only as dispenser of beer, but also serves full meals, so that the travelling trader is dependent on it. For as little as Eth. $0.25 (U.S. 10 cents) the patron may obtain a minimal meal of enjara bread, 2 liters of talla beer, and all the roast chickpeas and roasted barley ("qolo") he can eat; meatstew costs more. Often such a restaurant contains an extra room with a bed for the weary traveller to sleep in, and such an inn is then called "meshta byet" (lit. accommodation house, from "mesht" or "mest", meaning wife), for the traveller has no difficulty in securing a temporary wife for the duration of his local stay, among the divorcees.

275 The mead-house ("taj byet") does not even have the minimal
548 respectability of the talla byet. It is operated strictly for entertainment, i.e. drinking and sexual pleasures. For the owner, usually a clever, middleaged townswoman, it represents one of the few ways of amassing capital and becoming one of the wealthiest local citizens. She controls her waitresses much as a madam would. To protect herself from brawls, which are not infrequent, she also employs, - though they are kept out of sight so as not to frighten off customers, - one or several husky bouncers. The proverb says:

[539]

"In the prostitute's house,
all the time a scuffle."

For, even in prostitution a pretense of "temporary wife" is made.

587 The proverb says:

[539] "He who knows not how to kiss,
his nose he will blow on you."

The divorcée often develops strategy and techniques to win a man of her choice: She may give him a ring to remind him of her when he is away from her; when he visits her, she feeds him "ergo" (thick buttermilk), so he will be sleepy and remain at her house, rather than go to his men friends to gamble. Women have a proverb about men:

[539] "Like a child, (he is attracted) by the ring,
like a cat, (he is attracted) by milk."

If she has a mother who is a good cook, the divorcee will employ this attraction, saying:

[539] "More than the flesh of the daughter,
(he is attracted by)
the butter (i.e. cooking) of the mother."

[832] When this fails, she may enlist the supernatural aid of love amulets, "mästäfaqer", purchased from the däbtära scribe with the man's name inscribed, to inspire love for her in him; and in addition to the fee, may treat the dabtara to beer and sweets to enlist his greatest power on her behalf.

588 If her lover is already married, she may nevertheless establish a "sweetheart" ("wusherra") relationship with him, though she has no claim on "damoz" wages or recognition of this temporary wifehood. This is also one of the few cases in which a woman will try not to have children.

548 588 However, a divorcee who was divorced largely on account of her barrenness - and about 25% of the townswomen are barren at least for some years - will try to have a child, even out of wedlock. She will then very likely join the "unattached women" in the streets inhabited

554

302 was required of females past puberty, i.e. women of marriage age, and they were not supposed to substitute the less efficient method of shaving. The proverb says:

[539]

"To a man who plucks out,
to a woman who shaves (pubic hair),
forgive He (God) will not."

However, in the recent change situation, possibly since the spread of the European razor blade, plucking is becoming a lost art among the younger generation; and, while women now shave their pubic hair; men let it grow naturally as most of them apparently have always done.

515 The continuous polishing of teeth ("mewachä") has already been mentioned. This is one of the few activities of body care in which even men indulge as continuously as women. The reason is that it is not regarded as "for cleanliness" (which is considered less necessary for men, in a culture which regards women as "dirty"), but as "polishing" and "sharpening" this equipment of nature for powerful use, much like birds whet their beaks, readying them for action. The polishing is done with a hardwood twig, the ends of which are masticated first, and and motion is upward and downward, so that the upper gums receive considerable massage also.

302 Nails are given little attention, except in the case of the bride, whose nails are trimmed usually a day before the wedding, so that she will not be able to scratch the bridegroom when he has to use force to deflower her. Her nails are cut so short that not infrequently the skin is cut, and hot butter is applied, to heal them and also render the fingers caressingly smooth.

Reddening of palms, fingers and soles of feet is feminine procedure in preparation for holy days and festivities. The most common cosmetic used for this purpose is called "ensosella" (Impatiens tinctore), a

186 quoted to praise farming as the best and most typical Amhara occupation, casually refer to the Muslim as a person not bound by social ethics:

[539] "He traded - (then he) cheated;
he was appointed (official) - he began (to act) like a Muslim;
(but) he (who) was a farmer - and became a king!"

[177] Nevertheless, the influence of Islam, probably by slow diffusion, has been considerable on Abyssinian Christianity through the centuries. Their avoidance of "unclean, forbidden things" ("erm"), such as pork, though officially based on the Old Testament prohibitions, was probably reawakened or reintroduced and emphasized through the pressure of Muslim ideas, geographically so close.

[532] The Amhara paint an infidel, like any evil person, with one eye, in profile, for "he has only half a soul, is only half-born, sees only half the truth." The outsider is regarded as automatically of evil personality.

C. Amhara Ideas about Body and Personality.

826 Not all Amhara ideas about human beauty are dominated by racial criteria. A long, lean face ("fit s̈älkakka") is considered handsome in a man, while a broad face ("fit m̈da") is considered ugly; this may bear some relation to the gerontomorphic preference over the pedamorphic.

[304] A long neck ("angät") is a mark of beauty, in both sexes, but noted especially in the woman who therefore may have a series of necklaces tattooed on to her neck. The beauty of the long neck is referred to in the following proverb:

[539] "The neck of the dead child
is longer (than ever);
(meaning, "a good thing that came when of no use).

The forehead is considered the location of good fortune, and a large forehead is considered a mark of beauty in men.

826 Projecting teeth, especially incisors ("gätata") are considered ugly, wild animal-like, and it is an insult to call such a person [302] "tersam" (lit. toothy). Hair is grown long and standing up stiff by warriors who wish to appear ferocious. The hairdoes of women are diverse. Baldness ("tämällätä") is relatively rare, and if at all, comes very late. Big hips, though covered, are considered an important mark of beauty in a woman, while little attention is paid to the breasts which lose their youthful shape early in life due to prolonged breastfeeding. The ideal feminine body is a fairly short, hippy woman ("täfär wägäb") with high-bridged nose and bulging eyes. On the other hand, a woman with small or lean hips, called "dog hips" ("wesha wägäb"), whose hips are sharply outlined ("wägäb araqi"), is considered deficient in feminine allure. The proverb says:

● [539] "(strong) child from hippy woman;
(good) grain from lower terrain (more fertile)."
"A short man is like a monkey,
(but) a short woman like a noblewoman."

The seat of strength in a man is not considered to be in the biceps, but is believed located in the knee ("gulet"). This is examined when hiring a laborer (formerly also in a soldier), perhaps because t he physical type of most Amhara is slender, and their legs have little visible musculature - though much endurance. It is still considered praise to call a young man "gulnasa" (powerfully kneed), and the Amhara take great pride in being able to walk long distances without a rest; flexing the tendon behind the knee ("gwaja"). The elbow is the next place ("gendam" man with powerful elbow) of strength. Bowlegs ("waraba") are considered the result of riding too much, and are not regarded as a special mark of ugliness.

826 A very thin person ("jemmatan") is regarded as being full of tendons, nerves and veins, all of which are generically called "jemmat"; they are conceived as running through the body like the fibers of a tree.

The beard comes late, and since a good chin whisker is rare before the age of 30, it is regarded as a sign of maturity. The proverb says:

[539] "Beard, lacking to the teacher;
cypress, lacking to the church; (i.e. symbol of the churchyard) (are one)." (i.e. neither will be fully respected.)

[779] The dichotomy of the human body, in the religion, considers the upper part holy; and the lower part, which serves sex and defecation, as profane. To illustrate one who serves two misters, the proverb says:

[539] "Above the hips - the tabot (sacred tablet of the church),
below the hips - idols."

No distinction is made in body hair, whether it is usually scanty under-arm hair ("cheggum") or pubic hair, except that the latter was supposed to be plucked out by women. Despite the distinction of sacred and profane body parts, this distinction does not apply to archangels and saints, every part of whose body is lauded in some of the liturgy, e.g. in the book "Malek Mikael" which eulogizes also the body of this archangel.

Abnormalities of the human body are attributed to the effect of the supernatural. In the case of a new-born child, abnormality of body attributed to an evil spirit, especially a male "zar" who has magically possessed the mother and who is jealous of the human husband whom he regards as his rival. In case of transvestites, who are always believed to be hermaphrodites ("fenafel"), the abnormality is actually referred to as a "mistake of God".

827 person would use direct terms relating to certain body functions: "ar" (fecal matter), "shänna" (he urinated), etc. Polite circumscription is well developed. But the actual carrying out of basic body functions is merely channelled, not repressed, even in "polite society". Farting, e.g., which is almost inevitable after consuming the daily "qolo" (roast peas or barley), is channelled as expressed in the following proberb:

[539] "The Abyssinian is clever;
bowing low (before the great man), he (silently) farts".

Spitting is the inevitable result of masticating the end of the twig used as a toothbrush; but it is not nearly as voluminous as the low-class spitting ("tiq alä", or "entef alä", both alliterations) of the Sudanese ex-slaves (Barya) and Muslim Abyssinians who hold a wad of tobacco between lower lip and gum, chew, and spit.

828 157 In the conceptualization of human personalities, the Amhara take subject matter also from physiological functions and from the ethnic and other divisions of the class structure:

The Rustic (esp. peasant):
"balagär" (lit. man of the rural country), also "balage". Unpolished, impolite, vulgar.
"wetter" - ignorant person who asks embarassing questions to "inflate his own belly".

The Simple-minded: "yawah" - simple, good, modest, honest, frank, sincere.
"wedegät" - (lit. young bull) - simpleton, who causes damage without meaning to; e.g. who cannot hold his tongue.

The Fool: "dongworo" (lit. deaf; deaf-mute) Stupid person whose mind nothing seems to penetrate.

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828
157 "galeb" - one who shines with intelligence;

"galbam" - Person full of reason, discretion, intellectual beauty.

812 It is clear from the last two personalities that a distinction is made between the merely clever (e.g. in material things) and the wise person. Wisdom is stressed in numerous proverbs:

[539] "A king who has no wise councillor,
not one year will he reign".

Many Amhara desirous of reputation, emulate the Biblical wisdom of King Solomon, a wise judge whom "no one could fool". Anecdotes of this type of wisdom are told far and wide, of kings and of rulers of provinces. Even at present, some of these anecdotes are told of rulers still living, including of Emperor Haile Selassie. The following two anecdotes, which may well be factual, are told in Gondar about Ras Imru, who ruled as governor-general of Begemdir province just after the liberation from Italian occupation, when banditry was a major problem:

539 1. Two bandits accused of robbery-murder were placed in separate con-
812 finement. They had refused to confess, and the time of the murder could not be ascertained. One bandit was taken to the place of the crime, on orders of Ras Imru, and told that his partner had confessed; then, that the time of the crime had been such-and-such. Eager to argue against such an error, the bandit momentarily overlooked the fact that by correcting the time element he was giving himself away. Whereupon both were convicted and hanged.

2. One day, while riding through the market, Ras Imru was halted when a woman threw herself before his horse, shouting "abyet", the traditional appeal of the oppressed. She accused one of Ras Imru's soldiers of having consumed a large pitcher of milk she had for sale, without payment. The soldier denied it, and there were no witnesses

812 willing to testify against him. Ras Imru ordered that he be made to
[539] vomit, and on the basis of this evidence convicted him on the spot.

While the clever arguer in court, who is acclaimed, may be merely "clever", the truly wise man is conceived as one whose words are few but weighty:

[539] "Man, by what can he be valued?
by his speech can he be valued".

Hence, in the games of growing children, the hazing pattern is gradually replaced by verbal contests, and the winner or "better man" is not necessarily the physically stronger but he who can out-insult and out-argue the other.

However, individualistic non-conformity in ordinary persons is criticized, and regarded as rendering such persons shiftless, unstable and impermanent.

Finally, different regions of Amhara-populated areas are believed to be specialized in specific types of personalities; e.g. the däbtära scribes of Ənṭoṭo, where the capital of Addis Ababa is located now, have long had the reputation of special cleverness, speaking in riddles which make understanding painful, when they deign to converse at all with ordinary Amhara commoners:

[539] "The wise men of Ənṭoṭo,
talk just once a year,
(and then) always (bitingly) bitter".

[771] Special skill of hand or mind is generally believed, for good or ill, to come from the world and functions of the spirits.

756 His clientele in this role consists largely of women, who often come to him with petty problems, whom he can charge little for his services, but who provide him with a regular, though modest, income. A täntqway, unlike zar doctor or dabtara, never becomes rich. Also, both peasant women and townswomen go to him to have their personal fortunes told. He sympathizes with them in their marital quarrels, encourages them to be disobedient to their husbands and to bring him money and gifts withheld from the husband. Consequently, men consider the täntqway a wrecker of marriage, and so does the church. The proverb says:

[539]

"Lying täntqway,
the house he destroys".

Men do consult him on the occasion of stolen property, but are ashamed to be seen going to his house. They go secretly.

There is a significant element of competition between the täntqway and the däbtära, though the latter is considered far superior, "educated", and is now actually driving the täntqway out of much of his business.

In the popular Amhara mind, the täntqway is regarded as fearful of the däbtära. For the latter can undo the success of the former through magic formulae written in Geez, copies from secret Geez books. With such a formula, the däbtära can go to the river, call the ganyen water-spirits and instruct them to steal the "bag of tricks" of the täntqway, or to refuse to come when called by the täntqway. The dabtara disdains to use the bag of tricks, regarded as primitive and when he captures it will destroy it. Conversely, if a dabtara has "charmed" a thief by giving him a specially written amulet against capture by the police, nothing the tanqway can do

795 His social status compares to that of a "great man" (telleq säw),
756 but much of this is due to the fear in which he is held, because of his power over the supernatural world, in Amhara belief. There is fear that if someone were to offend him, he might use his powers to do evil - though black magic is not his usual metier. (The "love magic" of the däbtära has been described in relation to sex).

● [539] "of insects, the worst is the scorpion;
of men, the worst is the däbtära".

[574] For the dabtara are unabashed in inviting themselves to feasts, weddings and any distribution of goods (e.g. parceling out of meat as soon as an ox has been slaughtered). In fact, they often act as if the host owed them an apology for not having sent an official invitation. Therefore, dabtara are usually invited to family feasts even if they are not kin.

795 The däbtära learns his craft through apprenticeship, beginning
756 when in the upper grades of church school. To achieve this, he
874 must be "attentam" (of unmixed Amhara or Tigre stock), have a good chanting voice and musical ear, be good in school, and find a däbtära-teacher willing to impart his knowledge to him. At this stage in church school he begins to be permitted to learn to write; and is not punished for doodling - forbidden at lower grades for fear a student might stumble on a formula and misuse a powerful spell.

795 There is even one priestly function which the däbtära occasionally
756 carries out. That is "re-baptism". He may re-baptize a patient vic-
[183] timized by ganyen, sometimes also cases of buda, as part of exorcism.

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538 When miffed, or in temporary disgrace, he would request permission to return to his native
159 Gondar. Subsequently he would send excuse after excuse to the capital for refusing to go back there, until he felt that he had been sufficiently coaxed to assuage his pride as a scholar and that further hesitation might result in serious difficulties, even for him. Empress Taitu was a very powerful figure and often protected him when he had gone too far with Emperor Menelik (her fifth husband).

[114] Although the following stories have no titles except "Story of Alāqa Gäbre-Hanna," I have given them names to point up the major emphasis. This material was gathered orally from Amharic-speaking peasants and nobles in the Gondar region (during my field trip to that area in 1953-54 on a grant from the Ford Foundation).

●539 *The Wit And The Nitwit.* AG-H didn't like the rumor going around that he had become a snob, that he didn't greet common people politely any more. One day, accompanied by his usual retinue of friends and admirers, he was greeted effusively with deep bows by a certain donkey-
[576] driver who was known as none too bright. In return, to quash the nasty rumors, AG-H bowed just as deeply, from the hips, instead of the usual nod from one of his station in life. But, unable to resist the temptation for a witticism, he greeted the donkey-driver with the words *"Endēt ad-derachuh?* 'How are *ye*?' "

Unaware that the second person plural had been used, the proud donkey-driver was soon boasting at the nearest barley-beer hut of the honor he had received. His cronies made him repeat the exact remark, suspecting some twist. They quickly convinced the poor fool that the greeting had included him in the same class with his donkeys, and the simpleton slunk away in shame.

Another version of the story: But the donkey-driver was, after all, a proud Amhara. Realizing that he had been made a fool of, he took his walking stick, went to the house of AG-H, and beat him unmercifully. This was one time that his wit struck back at him.

Good Eating Comes First. Though greatly honored at the court of Emperor Menelik in newly-built Addis Ababa, AG-H was once again homesick for his native Gondar. Finally, he was granted permission for a leave home.

He promptly organized his small caravan and was about to mount his mule when he noticed two fat cows being taken to slaughter. Thinking of the long trip ahead without fresh beef, he decided to wait around and obtain a good share of the meat which was being rapidly parcelled out. The meat had to be washed down with a huge jugful of barley-beer and honeymead, and so the day passed with pleasant feasting. It was late afternoon when it happened that Emperor Menelik came riding by. Surprised to see the homesick scholar still in the capital, the Emperor addressed him: "I gave you permission to go, and you are still here?"

But, as usual, his wit did not fail AG-H. *"Lam gäb* 'the cows were entering,' your Majesty," he replied. (The phrase is used to indicate dusk, when the cows come home, too late to start on a trip. The cows had indeed "entered," i.e., into the stomach of AG-H; and no one could accuse him later of having told a lie to the Emperor.)

Pride Of A Man From Gondar Province. The next time AG-H became homesick occurred in the middle of the long Lenten fast. The housewives of Gondar were famous for their many spicy recipes for cooking fish in that season, and when AG-H thought of these his mouth watered and nothing pleased him any more in Shoa province.

One day he was invited to dine at the house of a noble of Shoa. The odor of fish being cooked attracted him to the cooking hut. It seemed to him that the woman cook had not properly cleaned the fish and had added too much water. He began to moan and groan.

"What's the matter?" asked his host.

Pointing to the watery fish stew, AG-H replied: "The fish are better off than I. They are *in their native state*, but I am so far from mine!"

Safety From Robbers. Once again the long rainy season was over, the rivers had receded, and the trails were passable again. AG-H managed to obtain a generous purse of Maria-Theresa thalers from the Empress and was on his perennial way back to Gondar.

He was just emerging from the lowland valley of the Abbai (Blue Nile) to climb up the escarpment of the dangerous province of Gojjam, which he had to traverse. Suddenly one of his companions spotted a band of robbers waiting at the top of the upland trail.

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AG-H quickly ducked behind a bush. He placed the purse in his *gäbäte*, the lengthwise half of a gourd which all travelers carry for mixing their ration of crushed linseed (called *tälba*) with water. He wrapped this in a piece of colorful imported silk that he had bought as a gift for his home church. Flattening the package as much as possible, he placed it on his head in the manner of the Abyssinian priests when they carry the *tabot*, the sacred tablet which is taken from the inner sanctum of the church to a pool of water on the day of the saint after whom the church is named. With his free hand he quickly folded his daytime toga in the manner of one going to church and borrowed the largest cross his companions were carrying. Holding it before him like a weapon, and looking serious, holy, and unafraid, AG-H led the caravan as he climbed up the trail in a slow, dignified manner.

When the bandits drew near, they bowed politely. AG-H stopped and gave them the cross to kiss. They asked respectfully to which saint his *tabot* had been consecrated. He replied with the most common one, *Qeddus Giyorgis* 'St. George.' Then they wanted to know which parish church it was from. By this time the old wit had returned to AG-H, and he answered: *"Yätalba masha Giyorgis"* 'St. George of the linseed-paste.'

The bandits nodded gravely and escorted him all the way up the escarpment, explaining that the area was dangerous and full of organized bandits. Some days later they learned how they had been fooled, and forever after they were on the lookout for AG-H on the banks of the Blue Nile.

Poetic Revenge. AG-H had spoken a candid truth once too often and was in official disgrace with Emperor Menelik. As usual, when miffed, he retired to Gondar.

But this time, having left Addis Ababa unofficially and quickly, his finances were low. Adding to his discomfiture was the news, brought to him by a friend from the capital some months later, that Menelik was amusing himself by telling stories of the misdeeds and follies of AG-H.

An idea of poetic revenge came to him. He instructed his friend to go to the Emperor and report that AG-H had died and that his kinsmen in Gondar were too poor to hold a fitting *täzkar*, a big memorial feast held forty days after death.

Empress Taitu was first to hear of the sudden death of her favorite. She promptly stormed into the chambers of Emperor Menelik, much as she had stormed into the battle of Adua against the Italians shortly before, riding with the troops of her own province. "You murderer," she shouted at the Emperor, "you broke his heart, you banned him from the court." She threw up her hands in misery, wailed as if a close kinsman had died, moving back and forth, chanting aloud about the goodness of the deceased. After a while this began to affect even the iron Menelik. At this point the messenger brought up the rest of his news, the *täzkar* problem. Menelik promptly gave him the huge sum of ten thousand thalers, to assuage his own feelings of guilt and to calm the Empress.

For a while AG-H enjoyed the fruits of his revenge back in Gondar. But he knew that he could not hide forever. Moreover, his generosity to kinsmen, neighbors, and transient monks was such that before long his money was gone.

So one day he reappeared in Addis Ababa. When he first approached the Empress, the stout woman almost fainted. She immediately sent a messenger to the Emperor. Unwilling to believe the news, he sent the messenger back to ask whether the Empress was feeling well. Thereupon, she took AG-H by the hand and stormed into Menelik's chamber. The Emperor was too shocked and surprised to be angry. He managed to inquire, "How is it that the dead arise from the grave?"

With a deep bow, AG-H replied: "Your Majesty, it is not uncommon in our Christian religion to arise from the dead" [alluding to the resurrection of Jesus].

Another version: While in disgrace, and living in Gondar, the newly-rich AG-H neglected his field, wasted his money and, toward the end of the rainy season, his wife and children were starving. So he sent his long-suffering wife to Addis Ababa with the false story of his death and need for *täzkar* money. Explaining his reappearance later, AG-H said, "Your Majesty, I so longed to see the faces of your Majesties again that I was not at peace in the earth and had to return."

A third version: "Your Majesty, they had so many rules and regulations up there [pointing to heaven] that I preferred to return and live under the rules of Your Majesty."

Sex On The Hill. Women are forgetful creatures. Sometimes they don't even remember that they don't wear trousers under their cotton skirts. One day AG-H was climbing up a steep trail in the company of men and women. A connoisseur of female flesh, he kept behind the women

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539 and was always looking up intently and with concentration. One of his friends asked him, "What are you looking for?"

"*Mauča*," replied the wit in his classic manner. [The literal meaning is "exit," i.e., either the exit from the trail on the tiring climb, or "the place where we emerge" from the female body.]

The Wit At Home. Home in his hut in Gondar, AG-H was one day at dusk lying on his bed. [56] His wife had gone to the river to wash her private parts, as is the custom of the Amhara women at nightfall. Tired from the uphill climb from the valley, she rested before the hearth to dry herself, but dozed off. Soon AG-H heard a cannonade of farting, issuing from his half-conscious wife. He called out to her, "Where are you? Come to bed!"

Awakening, she said dazedly, "I am just drying myself."

To which he replied, "You are drying yourself so much that you are cracking apart."

[302] *A Woman's "Way."* [In accordance with ancient custom, women used to pluck out their pubic hair, rubbing ashes between their fingers to get a good grip while plucking.]

One day a girl student of AG-H was late for her lesson. Taking a quick short-cut across the back yard, she tumbled into the ash heap, soiling her lower toga and her legs with the ashes. She excused her appearance to her teacher, saying, "Oh, Master, I was so eager to come quickly, and now I have dirtied myself with ashes all over."

"That is *your way*," nodded AG-H.

Only much later did the girl learn that he had meant not only the wrong way she had come, but was referring to the fact that being smudged with ashes was the natural "way" for a woman.

[564] *The Pot Of Caste.* [The women of the Falasha caste are makers of pottery, a despised occu-
[323] pation among the Coptic Amhara, though much appreciated by the Amhara, who buy all their better pots from them.]

The wife of AG-H, quarreling with a certain woman, accused her of being of Falasha ancestry and that her mother had been a pottery-maker. One day that woman returned from the river valley, carrying a large, full pot of water on her back. She saw AG-H sitting in front of his hut, and decided to take the opportunity to complain to him about the taunts of his wife.

AG-H disliked being involved in the petty quarreling of the womenfolk, but he listened quietly. As she took leave, he patted her full clay pot and said, "*This* is your work."

She thought that he meant she should not quarrel with his wife; should instead attend to her tasks of fetching water, cooking, etc. But on further reflection what had he meant? Had he accused her of being a pottery-maker herself?

Jealousy Is Dangerous. AG-H was also notorious for his prowess in bed and his fickleness in love.

One day his wife had to go far down to a valley to fetch water, since the dry season had left only water holes in the river bed. She left him in charge of their baby. Taking the baby with him, he went to the hut of his current girl friend and spent the afternoon making passionate love. As it happened, this woman also had a baby about the same age. Dusk came rapidly, and AG-H knew that his wife would soon be back. In the hurry, he took the wrong baby.

A moment after his return his wife arrived, laden with water pot and firewood. When she beheld the baby of her current rival, she became very angry and said, "This thing is not my baby! Shall I throw it in the fire?"

Calm as ever, AG-H replied: "There is a fire also in the house of his mother."

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5 / *Tradition and Modernization*

THE GENIUS OF AMHARA CULTURE

The Amhara as a whole are not much given to aesthetic concerns. They are practical-minded peasants, austere religionists, and spirited warriors. Their interests and achievements as a nation are chiefly in the spheres of military activity and government. And yet, if we seek some theme with which to gain an entree into the spirit of their society and culture, we will do well to attend to the sphere of poetry. For it is a poetic phenomenon—that represented by the title of this book—which constitutes both a key to the genius of Amhara culture and a highly distinctive Amhara contribution to Ethiopian culture.

Sam-ennā warq ("wax and gold") is the formula used by the Amhara to symbolize their favorite form of verse. It is a form built of two semantic layers. The apparent, figurative meaning of the words is called "wax"; their more or less hidden actual significance is the "gold."

In its generic sense, the expression *sam-ennā warq* refers to a number of poetic figures which embody this twofold meaning. The use of such figures distinguishes the Amhara equivalent of true poetry from ordinary verse, in which everyday language is merely embellished with rhyme and rhythm. In the genre known as *qenē*, the original and more elegant kind of *sam-ennā warq* poetry, the lines are composed in Ge'ez and depend primarily on religious symbolism. But *sam-ennā warq* constructions also appear in some types of secular verse in the vernacular Amharic and, indeed, at times inform Amharic conversation.

Masters of the art of *qenē* composition have analyzed these poetic figures into about a dozen different types.[4] *Sam-ennā warq* in its more specific sense refers to one of these types of figures—the prototype of them all. It consists of an explicit comparison in which the subjects being compared—the wax and gold—are presented in apposition, while their predicates are rendered jointly by a single verb which carries both a wax and a gold meaning. (This terminology is derived from the work of the goldsmith, who constructs a clay mold around a form created in wax and then, draining the wax, pours the molten gold into that form.) So, for example, if the poet's aim is to praise a hero like Emperor Menelik, he creates a wax model, like "the lion," in terms of whose actions the gold, Menelik, is depicted: "The lion Menelik crushed the wolf Italy."[5]

Keeping this dual imagery consistent throughout the stanza is a primary rule of wax-and-gold composition. A poet who mixes his metaphors is sometimes rebuked with the epithet "hermaphrodite." The following example presents an Amharic couplet which properly embodies the *sam-ennā warq* figure:

Etsa balas balto addām ḳanfareshe
Madhānē alam lebē tasaqala-leshe.

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538
• 539
19 Since Adam your lip did eat of that Tree
The Savior my heart has been hung up for thee.

In this couplet the wax of Adam's sin and Christ's crucifixion in his behalf has been used as a form in which to pour a love message. A literal translation of the wax of the couplet is:

Because Adam ate of the apple from the Tree of Knowledge
The Savior of the World has been crucified for thee.

To savor the gold of the couplet fully, one must know that the verb meaning "was crucified," *tasaqala*, may also signify "is anxious to be near." So a literal translation of the gold would be:

Because of your [tempting] lips
My heart is anxious to be near thee.

538 In other more commonly used figures, the duplexity of the message be-
19 comes less explicit. In figures known as ***hiber and merimer***, the wax and gold are combined in the same word or phrase instead of being put side by side. These figures thus correspond to the English pun. In verses which employ these figures the wax is often but a contrived and transparent excuse for getting to the real point, which appears only in the pun line. Such verses are
[522] highly prized, however, for the Amhara tends to regard the pun as a very
538 high form of humor. Here are two examples of Amharic couplets based on
539 simple puns:
522
19

(1) *Ya-mĭn ṭĭqem ṭallā ya-mĭn ṭĭqem ṭajji*
Tallāt sishañu bunā adargaw enji.

Of what use is *ṭallā*, of what use is *ṭajji*?•
When seeing an enemy off, serve him coffee.

(2) *Yābbāt eddā la-lĭjj yebāl nabar dero:*
Bāyāt eddā gabāhu ennē-mā zandero.

In olden times a father's debt was passed down to his son;
But here I have a debt today by grandfather begun.

The pun in the first example lies in the phrase ***bunā adargaw*** ("serve him coffee"), which by elision becomes ***bun adargaw*** ("reduce him to ashes"). In the second couplet the pun hinges on the word *bāyat*, which signifies "grandfather" but may also be understood to represent *bāyhuāt* ("because I saw her"). The gold meaning of this couplet is thus: It used to be said that one inherited the debt of one's father, but in my case it was the sight of her that put me into debt.

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[273] • *Ṭallā* is a kind of beer made from barley. *Ṭajj* (pronounced *ṭajji* here for the sake of rhyme) is mead.

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Ethiopic verse becomes most obscure in the figure known as *wesṭa wayrā* ("inside of olive tree"). Here only the wax is given, and the listener must work to unearth the gold. Often this can be done only when the circumstances under which the verse was made up are known. The author of a *wesṭa wayrā* often refuses to reveal anything that may help the listener to grasp its hidden meaning.

The expression *wesṭa wayrā* alludes to the fact that the inner core of the olive tree is a hard substance encased by bark of a different color. The implication is that the inner sense of a *wesṭa wayrā* poem is concealed by a veneer which conveys a quite different sense and is difficult to penetrate. This figure is thus especially suitable for expressing insults in a safe way and for esoteric philosophical or religious message. Here is an instance of the latter usage:

Ya-bāhetāwi līj siſalleg lə'ullennā
Ya-kristosn mesht talānt washama-nnā
Qeṭal betābalaw hono qarama-nnā.

The son of a hermit, high rank to display,
Made love with Christ's wife yesterday;
When she fed him leaves he wasted away.

The surface meaning of this tercet describes an ambitious man who had relations with "Christ's wife" in order to raise his status, for in Ethiopia having relations with a woman of high rank is one way to gain prestige. Instead of advancing his position, however, this man lost all his power when the woman fed him (medicinal) leaves. The esoteric meaning, on the other hand, refers to the experience of a hermit. His "son" is intended to symbolize his hunger, and "Christ's wife" symbolizes fasting. The "inside" meaning, the gold, is therefore that the hermit's hunger is heightened by its relations with fasting, but it diminishes when he is fed leaves, the hallowed diet of a hermit.

The mode of the various poetic figures collectively designated as *sam-ennā warq* is intellectual rather than sensuous. The chief delight of Ethiopic poetry is to attain a maximum of thought with a minimum of words. This effect is reached, as we have seen, through subtle allusions and plays on words. The point may be a serious moral comment, the understanding of which requires one to decipher hidden references to biblical passages or sacred legends; or it may be a jest about love based on a pornographic pun. In any case, the more ingeniously compact and obscure the construction of the verse, the more pleased will be the poet and his audience. Weighty (i.e., mysterious) verse is the ideal, for as the Amhara say, "weighty verse, like heavy clothing, warms the insides."

The creation of the wax and gold figures was an integral part of the development of *qenē*, the genre of verse composed to be sung at the conclusion of devotional services in the church. And *qenē* appears to be a specifically

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kindles artistic expression, so the poet could wax eloquent over Gondar's decadence at the close of the eighteenth century:

> Beautiful from its beginnings, Gondar, hope of the wretched!
> And hope of the great, Gondar, without measure or bounds!
> O dove of John, Gondar, generous-hearted, mother!
> Gondar, never bowed by affliction!
> Gondar, with its merry name!
> Gondar, seat of prosperity and of savoury food!
> Gondar, dwelling of King Iyāsu and of mighty Bakāffā!
> Gondar, which emulated the city of David, the land of Salem!
> She will be a myth unto eternity.
> How is it she has been destroyed like Sodom, and without any guilt?[9]

So, while the reputation of the Gondar monarchy grew dim, that of the town as a center for religious studies continued unabated. Gondar was the most famous place in the country for instruction in art, music, dance, poetry, and the great books of the Ethiopian Church, and young men continued to travel great distances to drink at such sources. The descendants of royalty somehow made their adjustment. In the middle of the nineteenth century, Arnauld d'Abbadie finds them making paintings and illuminating manuscripts.

At this late date, one more personality of stature emerges from Gondar. This time it is not a king but a *dabtarā*, or man of religious learning—Alaqā Gabra Hānnā. Gabra Hānnā was born in the district of Foggarā on the east coast of Lake Ṭānā. His pursuit of religious studies as a youth took him to Gondar, where he did well and before long became a teacher in the church of Ba'ātā Māryām. Subsequently he was made head of the church, receiving the customary title of *alaqā*.

While at Ba'ātā, Alaqā Gabra Hānnā invented a new style of dance for the clergy. In the traditional style of *aquāquām*, the bodies and sticks of the dancers move up and down, punctuating the flow of chant with alternately gradual and abrupt vertical movements. Alaqā Gabra Hānnā, inspired by the lateral movement of the waves at Lake Ṭānā and of the bamboo reeds in the breeze at its shore, taught that bodies and sticks should sway from side to side. This innovation was rejected by the conservative clergy at Gondar, but it was carried by his son Taklē to Dabra Tābor and from there spread elsewhere.

Alaqā Gabra Hānnā became most famous, however, for his quick and biting wit. So prolific and beloved were his witticisms that in a collection of some three hundred old parables and anecdotes published in Addis Ababa in 1955, no fewer than 25 per cent are devoted to stories about him.[10] After reaching prominence through his teachings and sayings, Alaqā Gabra Hānnā

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for a while at Masala Māryām in Manz. His sojourn there, remembered to this day, is recorded in the amusing rhymed formula with which he exacted tribute from the various districts near his camp:

> From Agāntchā/fifty *ḳoretchā* ("saddles"); from Hulu Dehā/fifty *dehā* ("servants"); from Aftanaṭ/fifty *naṭ* ("rugs"); from Godambo/fifty *gambo* ("jars of drink").

It was from Manz that Ba'eda Māryām brought priests to officiate at his coronation in Djagno.[20] According to Shoan beliefs, finally, Manz also served as a refuge during the invasions of Ahmad Grāñ for the fourth son of Lebna Dengel (1507–40), Yā'qob, who is said to have fled there with the royal raiments and received succor from the local inhabitants.

According to *Futuḥ el-Habacha*, Manz was ravaged by the forces of Grāñ in 1531.[21] Scarred timbers identified as pillars of churches burned during that invasion may be seen there today. Local legends concerning the history of Manz relate for the most part to the miraculous feats of strength which Grāñ is said to have performed there and to the resettlement of Manz after Grāñ. These legends speak of the "founding" of Manz by three men—Māmā, Lālo, and Gērā—who were sent by one of the emperors to settle and govern that territory. As the story goes, the emperor offered each of them as much land as he could cross in a single day. They set out from the Adabāy River, today a western boundary of Manz, and the result of their long day's journey was the present tripartite division of Manz into Māmā Meder, Lālo Meder, and Gērā Meder. This explains why Gērā Meder is the largest of the three districts—for Gērā's horse was the strongest!

Although their deeds are recorded only in the form of legends, Māmā, Lālo, and Gērā were historical personages. They appear to have lived in the latter part of the seventeenth century.[22] Gērā was the most powerful of the three, as the legend of his horse suggests. He controlled most of the land of Manz, including Afqārā, an impregnable mountain fortress which was used for generations as a garrison for political prisoners. He set aside a large stretch of grassland to be used by local people for grazing cattle and providing thatch for roofs, where still today it is forbidden to plow or build houses.

Not these three lords, however, but one of their rivals—Nagassē Kristos Warada Qāl, commonly known as Nagāssi—put Manz on the map. Nagāssi was born to a wealthy proprietor in the district of Agāntchā. As a young man he showed outstanding valor and skill at arms. His success in battle won him many followers, who helped him advance from enlarging his possessions at the expense of his neighbors to the conquest of Galla territories southeast of Manz.

Nagāssi's ambition was fed by his victories. He proclaimed himself ruling prince of Shoa, and vanquished those who disputed this claim, including the

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*175 who trailed the Gondar camp to make spades and plowshares, spears and swords, and so improved the quality of agriculture and warfare in Shoa.

The reign of Abbĭyĕ's son Amhāyas was long and prosperous. New lands were conquered, new settlements founded, new churches built. Amhāyas seized the strategic mountain of Ankobar, to which the mountainous plateaus of the north and the vast plains to the south were equally accessible, and set up his official residence there. The last of Shoa's princes to pay his respects to the court at Gondar, he was received there as an emissary of his father with great honors and treated more like a sovereign ally than a vassal.[27] When Amhāyas died, he left for his son Asfā Wassan what had by then become the vast principality of Shoa.

Asfā Wassan's youth was spent in a monastery in Manz, where he became proficient at composing *qenē* under the tutelage of a master from Gondar. As a ruler he resembled many of Gondar's monarchs, preferring to spend his time in religious pursuits and the embellishment of his capital (Ankobar) than on the warpath. The actual business of warfare he entrusted to his generals, who in a string of victories subjected dozens of Amhara and Galla districts to his authority. Nevertheless, when forced to fight, he lost no time in showing who was *marĭdāzmātch*. When two of his generals rebelled, he defeated them in what Cĕcchi called "the most terrible and bloody battle which the Shoans remember."[28]

Asfā Wassan deserved his name, which means "Expand the Border." He brought nearly all the petty states of Shoa under his rule, by alliance or by
*175 conquest. A famous exchange of couplets between Asfā Wassan and Ṭedu,
• 539 governor of Morat, formed the prologue to one instance of this expansion. Ṭedu, fearing the absorption of his territory, made the following rhyme:

Asfā Wassan Yefāt ṭanḳeraw yerrasu
Morat ṭeduāl belaw ḳamamalālasu.

O Asfā Wassan, stoutly plow Yefāt
Rather than eye what's baking in Morat.

*175 There is gold in the verb in the second line, *ṭeduāl*, which may signify not
538 only "is baking" but also "Ṭedu is there." The couplet may thus be read:
539
195 O Asfā Wassan, stoutly plow Yefāt
Rather than think about Ṭedu in Morat.

Upon hearing this couplet Asfā Wassan composed the following reply:

La-mofar la-qanbar yamihonaññen
Sālquarṭaw alqerem zandro ṭedun.

To get me yokes and plowbeams in this year
I will not fail to cut the juniper.

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[MANZ]

175* [538] [539] • [195]

The pun here is on the word *Ṭedu*, for the name of Asfā Wassan's adversary means "the juniper." Morat soon began to pay him tribute.[29]

Asfā Wassan also accomplished much in the field of administration. He organized his realm into four large provinces, which were in turn subdivided into thirty-nine districts—half Amhara lands, half lands taken from the Galla. He improved the laws and introduced a more orderly system of finance. He supported agriculture and encouraged trade.

Such prosperity could scarcely be viewed with indifference by Gondar. Takla Giyorgis I (1779–84), who was trying vainly to restore imperial authority at Gondar, marched to Shoa with a large force. Asfā Wassan, not ready for an open clash with the emperor's troops, handled the situation with characteristic Shoan adroitness. He heaped gifts upon the emperor and his lieutenants. Protesting his fealty, he noted that if he had extended his own dominions, it had been at the expense of their common enemy, the Galla. Finally, he said he was willing to pay tribute to the emperor, but at the same time was ready if necessary to meet him in battle. The lords who accompanied Takla Giyorgis sympathized with the Shoan, and the emperor was not strong enough to prevent their defection.

Worried by a monkish prophecy that his life would be short, Asfā Wassan emptied the state coffers in order to subsidize churches and monasteries. He lived to fill them time and again, during a reign that lasted thirty-three years. Throughout that time he never forgot his church schooling, and frequently invented *qenē* to be repeated in the churches on holidays. But Asfā Wassan was a true son of Manz, and left the memory, as Harris noted, of "a great Nimrod and an unparalleled warrior."[30]

The next ruler, Wassan Sagad, was the offspring of a fortuitous union between Asfā Wassan and Woizero Atmotch Hono, a relative of the imperial family at Gondar and owner of vast properties in Wallo. En route from Manz to Ankobar at the end of his student days, Asfā Wassan was given hospitality at the home of this genteel woman. Not aware that the lady had in fact been brought by his father with the hope of siring offspring from her, Asfā Wassan spent the night with her. When she bore a son, and Asfā Wassan learned who she really was, he fled in terror to the monastery of Ferkutā. After sending scouts to all the monasteries in the area, Amhāyas had his son brought back and granted him pardon.

Wassan Sagad was thus kin to the highest nobility through his mother as well as his father. His noble blood, haughty disposition, and clever mind moved him to great ambitions. He convoked a large assembly of Amhara and Galla, and proclaimed himself Rās of Shoa.* Then he sent word to Rās Gugsa, power behind the throne at Gondar, that he was coming to fight, "for

* *Rās* is the highest ranking secular title in Abyssinia after *negus* ("king"). Cf. chap. v, p. 158.

[554]

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(MANZ)

*175 643 nable. As the rainy season was approaching, Haile Malakot retreated to Shoa, where he fell sick and died. For the first time since Nagāssi, Shoa was left without an effective leader. Tēwodros marched into Manz from Wallo, and Shoa capitulated with little struggle. Eleven-year-old Menelik, son of Haile Malakot, was taken hostage.

Ten years later Menelik escaped from the camp of Tēwodros and regained Shoa. Slowly and carefully he built up his power. Tēwodros' reign raced to its tragic end. Takla Giyorgis II reigned briefly at Gondar, the last emperor to sit there. Yohānnes IV of Tigre governed the country for seventeen years. When Yohānnes died, Negus Menelik was forty-five and ready. Nagāssi's seed, eight generations later, reached the throne of all Ethiopia on November 3, 1889.

CULTURAL PROFILES

*175 185 [181] ***The Manzē Ethos***

The goals of Nagāssi and his descendants, apart from simple increase of power, were to recover the lands taken from their fathers and to stiffen the authority of Christianity in Shoa. Their success was virtually unbroken by reason of exceptional soldierly prowess and political perseverance. These are ideals and qualities embodied par excellence in the people of Manz.

423 181 [428] Sanctity of *rīst*, or land inherited from one's parents, is a cardinal value in the Manzē scheme of things. Such land must not be given or sold to anyone who is not a close relative. People generations removed from actual residents of Manz still retain claims to family land there, still cherish the idea that if they so desired they could go back and live on it. As an urbanized Manzē once told his nephew in Addis Ababa: "No matter how far you travel abroad, no matter how long you stay away, you will always be able to think of your family land in Manz as your true home." This sentiment is expressed in a proverb: [539]

> ***Ya-Manz rīst be-shi amatu/la-bālabētu.***
> Manz *rīst* to the thousandth year/belongs to the owner.

A squatter may fight to keep his land from falling to some stranger who claims it as having belonged to his grandfather, but in his heart he respects the values that support such a claim.

[577] By Manzē standards the good man is thus one who defends the land of his fathers, seeing that it is not sold to outsiders or that foreigners do not come to take it. If someone plows another's land without permission, he must be punished. If the matter can be settled through litigation, well and good; if it requires recourse to violence, so be it. To let such an offense go unavenged would be the worst sort of shame. Grievances concerning their "hereditary [685] [691]

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

411 standing at the long church services. Above all it is a weapon of offense and
181 defense, and every Amhara male is supposed to be skilled in its use. When the *dulā* is so employed in Manz, the *bānnā* blanket is usually wrapped around the left arm to form a quick shield, the *dulā* raised high with the right to bring down on the adversary's cranium. The blows are sometimes fatal. The Manzēs are proud of their facility with the lethal stick, and nearly every district in Manz boasts that it is real "*dulā* country."

726 The Manzēs also excel at *shīllalā*, the Abyssinian war chant. This is a
533 form of boastful verse—partly intoned, partly shouted—which is declaimed by
181 warriors to "heat their blood" before hitting the warpath. Children in Manz start practicing *shīllalā* almost as soon as they leave the breast. The following
• [539] is a good specimen of Manz *shīllalā:*

Agarātchn Māmā agarātchn Lālo wanzātchn Dangazē;
Mān abātu yāzzāl imbi senīl gizē.

Our land is Māmā, our land is Lālo, our stream the Dangazē;
What father will order us when *imbi* we say!

Imbi is an interjection used by children to express "No!" There is a double pun in this couplet. *Mān abātu* ("Who is the father?") is a profane idiom meaning "bastard." "To say *imbi*" is another idiom, meaning "to refuse." The second line may thus be also rendered as:

What bastard dare shove us around when we tell him to keep off our lands!

181 The Manzē code asks that a man be ready to defend his land and church
865 by force. It does not approve wanton aggression. But the Manzē's disposition
152 is notoriously aggressive, for his emotional life is relatively devoid of warmth
[577] and, on the other hand, fighting is so highly rewarded. Children are urged to be adept with the *dulā*. Their temper tantrums are welcomed as signs that they are brave. As a result the men of Manz are often overcome by the impulse toward physical aggression; assault and murder are recurrent events on their fields and trails and at their marketplaces. The discrepancy between the *norm* of physical bravery, which is operative *in certain specified circumstances*, and the *general character trait* of aggressiveness comprises a major theme in their emotional life: they feel obliged to look for justification for the aggressive actions which they have been conditioned to want to carry out. This disposition is illustrated in the words of the Manzē youth who said:

I want very much to kill somebody. The only problem is I'm not strong enough. Perhaps one day I will be. Why is it all right to kill? People kill sheep, don't they? And sheep are innocent, they don't know anything, don't do any wrong. But man knows, he knows much, and still he does wrong: every man is bad. I wouldn't kill everybody, only the bad ones. If I had an enemy, I would kill him. Maybe I will become a soldier, and kill my country's enemies.

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in such numbers that "Manzē" virtually became a synonym for "underground patriot."

After the liberation, as after the routing of Ahmad Grāñ's forces, the Manzē once again returned to redeem a ravished land. Slowly, the houses were rebuilt, the land was plowed once more. Churches which had been rebuilt after Grāñ's destruction only to be razed by the Italians were again put into place. Tough in his spiritual as in his physical life, the Manzē doggedly re-established the culture of his own. Now as before the occupation, a man of Manz sits on the throne, promising to let no foreigner take his country's land,* while the young braves celebrate the royal line in their festive boasting:

Ya-Manz ababā, ya-Manz ababā! Yābbabāl genā!
The flower of Manz, the flower of Manz! It will bloom yet again!

The Legacy of Manz and Gondar

Thus far the significance of Manz and Gondar has been discussed from the point of view of an outsider. We have attempted to assess, on the basis of the best available evidence, the respective historical and cultural roles of these two noted Amhara regions. We turn now to a different though related question, namely, the significance of these two places in the minds and feelings of Ethiopians themselves.

Two kinds of reaction are conspicuous. To the Ethiopian Modernist, Manz and Gondar are seen primarily as outlying pockets of conservatism. Their commitments to the past move them to resist certain changes promoted by the national government, with Manz protesting modern education and Gondar defending itself against nationalist centralization. They are regarded as backward areas, representative of the many forces that are "holding Ethiopia back," and to a certain extent are disdained.

To their inhabitants, on the other hand, these places are objects of intense loyalty. For differences of identity among the Amhara are defined chiefly in terms of their *agar*, or "home country." The size of one's *agar* is relative; it depends on the context in which the symbol is used, and may be as small as a district or as large as a province. Whatever the referent, one's *agar* signifies more than a place of residence or provenience. It means "home," and all those whose families live there are regarded with special affection, while those out-

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* On certain festive occasions the following antiphonal chant is declaimed in praise of "Ṭaqel" (the affectionate, "horse" name of Haile Selassie):

[Leader:] *Mīn āla taqel mīn āla?*
[Chorus:] *Agarē la-saw agarē la-saw alsaṭem ala!*
[Leader:] What did Ṭaqel say, what did he say?
[Chorus:] "My country to outsiders, my country to outsiders, I will not give!" said he.

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

heaven, *samāy*, the abode of supernatural beings and the souls of the dead. The earth is seen as flat, though some believe its shape to be square, others think it is round like a disc, and still others imagine it to extend without limit. That the terrain of Ethiopia is so obviously not flat is explained by reference to the great flood, after which the parts which dried quickly became highlands (*dēgā*), the parts slow to dry becoming lowlands (*qolā*). The peasant explains the greater heat of the lowlands by saying that they receive less wind than the highlands.

Beneath the earth's surface is an obscure area called *maq*, a depth to which the bodies of evildoers drop after burial. There is also a large subterranean ocean, *weqniyānos*, into which all the rivers and lakes on earth descend. The earth itself is held up, according to some, by a Y-shaped piece of wood; according to others, by two serpents; still another view is that no support is needed other than the will of God, as the saying indicates:

> Ay, My God! Lord who stretched forth the heavens without a pillar, and the earth without tent-pegs.

The rotation of the sun *above* the earth causes the alternation of night and day. The imagery of this rotation is that of someone going home at night and coming out in the morning. Attitudes toward the sun are quite ambivalent. The sun is appreciated for dispersing the morning chill and for causing seed to germinate, but it is feared as a source of sickness and death.*

The moon is highly regarded, which is probably a vestige of pre-Christian moon worship. At the Ethiopian latitude the moon is functional, for its bright illumination facilitates night travel, especially desirable in the hotter regions. Beyond this, the moon is considered a powerful agent. It is chief of the sky, commander of an army of stars and it is the force which causes crops to grow after the sun has brought forth seedlings.

In the heavenly realm there are two regions located on either side of God's dwelling-place. To the right is an area where good souls repair for an eternity of ease after being judged shortly after the death of their bodies. Known both as the "kingdom of heaven" and "paradise"—terms which refer to quite different spheres in the Orthodox cosmology but are fused in the vulgar mind—it is regarded as a home where food and clothes are plentiful and freely distributed. To the left is the place where wicked souls are taken by the devil to be scorched eternally in the fire of Gehenna, also called *Si'ol* (again a fusion of concepts which are distinct for the learned). This treatment of the damned is made worse by alternate dippings in icy water, though some believe that the wicked souls get a respite from their tortures on weekends.

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* The TAT's revealed a great dread of the sun; nearly every respondent interpreted one or another of the cards in terms of the sun's dangerousness.

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but also various categories of Amhara discriminated on the basis of sex, age, and social position. 186

Although Amhara women enjoy considerable property and inheritance rights, their generally depressed status reflects the low opinion commonly held of them. The peasant woman's lot is as hard as that of a slave. In the wealthier families, where domestic drudgery is relieved by servants, she must still be a passive, reserved nonentity. Women are beaten as a matter of course for mistakes in their work or apparent flirtations with other men. As the proverb says: "Women and donkeys need the stick." "Woman's work" is referred to derisively by men; "woman's language" is the epithet for vulgar and trivial talk. 562 [565]* [539]

A common justification for keeping women at home nearly all the time is that if they are allowed to go outside they will stir up all manner of trouble, for by nature they are gossipers and deceivers. Another proverb tells us: "Mules and women will betray you." In a number of legends, including those connected with the saintly figures of Eṣhē Yohānnes and Takla Hāymānot, women have been turned to stone because of their vile tongues and treacherous ways. Menstruation is viewed as the punishment incurred by womankind as a result of that first great treachery in Eden. [539] [841]

Children are considered inferior because they are governed by ignorance and passion. Toward infants the Amhara is lenient. Because "infants and cattle are the same," tiny children are not expected to perform reasonably. After two or three years, during which time the child has been indulged copiously by the father as well as the mother, his status begins to drop. He comes to be looked on as a servant. By about six years he has passed the first "age of reason," but he is wise enough only to stay away from fire, the edges of cliffs, and prickly plants. For most of his actions he must be given orders. 858 [864]

As the child grows older he is supposed to be dominated in turn by each of the four elements. The adolescent is likened to air: flighty, never settled. The young man is like fire: hot in picking quarrels as he is hot chasing after women, and altogether not worth very much. Only as a man approaches forty does he begin to gain respectability. He becomes cool, like water. This is a time when he minds his own business, does his work properly, and is not so prone to go about insulting others. This is the advent of the real age of reason, when a person arrives at an understanding of what is right and wrong in life. Most esteemed of all is the elder, the man of sixty or seventy. Like earth, he is settled and stable. He is sober, wise, indifferent to insults, pious, and ready to mediate rather than take part in quarrels. Children soon learn that older folk, not themselves, are the hope of the earth. This lesson was conveyed by the little boy who, when asked what he wanted to become when he grew up, replied: "I want to become an elder." 882 885 888 [867]

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Still another invidious distinction of considerable importance in the Amhara outlook is that between the "big man" (*ṭillīq saw*) and the commoner (*terā saw*). "Bigness" may be measured in terms of political power, economic wealth, ecclesiastical status, or any combination thereof. Though the peasant frequently has little affection for the big man, he customarily treats him with the greatest show of deference. No matter how unfamiliar a big man may be or from what part of the country he comes, the Amhara peasant sees him as entitled to unquestioning courtesy and obeisance. Analogous distinctions discriminate between the wealthy (*hābtām*) and the poor (*dehā*), and between the genteel (*çhawā*) and the rude (*bālagē*).

Yet if the Amhara takes a dim view of women, youth, and poor folk, as well as non-Amhara and non-Christians, he suffers from no illusions about homo sapiens at his best—unless they are dark illusions. The generic word for "man" in Amharic, *saw*, is the subject of a number of negative associations and idiomatic uses.[12] At its worst, the word is found in an idiom that signifies the evil eye (*ya-saw ayn*), literally: the "eye of man" (or, more idiomatically, "the eye of others"). At its best, when used to signify a fully formed human being, the word *saw* characteristically appears in the plaintive saying, *Saw yallam* ("there is no human being"); in other words, an individual who fully embodies the concept of humanity does not exist. In general, one may say that the Amhara's view of human nature is dominated by his perception of man's inherent aggressiveness and untrustworthiness.

The Amhara believes that unformed human nature is poor raw material, and that without strict punishment throughout childhood a person will grow up to be rude and offensive toward others. As an adult, moreover, he must constantly be kept in check. The rationale commonly given for the extensive schedule of fasting is that man's nature is wicked, and only by weakening himself in this manner will he be turned away from some act of aggression against others.

The Amharic concept of *ţegābaññā* illustrates this view. *Ţegābaññā* literally carries the meaning of one who has been sated with food and drink, but is normally taken to mean someone who begins to insult and pick fights with others. In their use of this and related words the Amhara express the belief that aggression is the usual consequence of being sated. Insubordinate behavior on the part of a servant or political appointee is usually explained as a result of his having been too well fed. "When a peasant gets sated he hits with his stick. . . " is the first line of a number of couplets I collected among rural Amhara. The specific effect of drinking alcoholic beverages is believed to release, not Eros, but the aggressive instincts. An Amharic proverb about *tallā* states this directly: "One [glass] whets the appetite; two quenches it; three heats one up; four makes one quarrel; five brings fighting; six causes killing." Contrary to the view that world peace depends chiefly on filling

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THE PHENOMENA OF AMHARA ORALITY

Shortly after an Amhara child is born some butter is placed in his mouth. This is done in the belief that it will keep his voice from becoming harsh. From that moment on, the mouth never ceases to be an organ of extraordinary importance in his life. Its cultural importance is reflected in the attention given to it in the Amharic vocabulary: Baeteman's *Dictionnaire Amarigna-Français* lists some sixty idioms built with the Amharic word for mouth, *af*, more than are listed for any other words in the language except "eye," "heart," and "earth."[4] The organ is publicly celebrated in such proverbs as: "Cleverness of mouth, to the master; cleverness of hand, to the slave."

The oral zone is of course of universal significance. Some items of oral imagery probably appear in most languages, and manifestations of oral libido appear in many forms familiar to Westerners: the French love for gourmandism, the German passion for beer-drinking and singing, the American addiction to cigarettes, chewing gum, and "life-savers." Many of the less familiar phenomena to be related below in describing Amhara orality, moreover, are found in most of the cultures of Africa and the Middle East. But such phenomena often appear inconspicuously alongside other culturally patterned impulses and sublimations stemming from other phases of psychosexual development. What may distinguish the Amhara—and doubtless some other cultures—is the extent to which the oral zone is an object of attention and a source of behavioral modes and expressive symbolism. The Amhara, it appears, have a preoccupation with orality.

This preoccupation is manifest in three different kinds of phenomena. There are, first of all, aspects of Amhara culture which express a strong positive attachment to the infantile experience of sucking, in pure and in numerous sublimated forms. These we shall designate as the phenomena of *oral erotism*. Second, there are the aspects of Amhara culture which express a strong positive attachment to the oral zone as a center for various aggressive activities—the modes which Erikson calls "incorporation by biting," "oral retention," and "oral intrusion." These we shall collectively designate as the phenomena of *oral sadism*. Finally, there are phenomena which express a conflict about the gratification of many of these oral desires; and these we shall refer to as the phenomena of *oral ambivalence*.

Oral Erotism

Feeding at the breast is a prominent and beloved experience in Amhara life. The Amhara infant is suckled whenever he wishes, at the slightest show of desire. Since he is rarely separated from his mother it is easy for him to satisfy himself at any time of day or night. Popular beliefs about breast-feed-

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[539]

> The boundaries of your lips are like the sugar cane;
> No matter how much one sucks them, one is never satisfied.

And in one of the few lyric passages in the first novel ever written in Amharic, the author resorts to the imagery of kissing in describing the beauty of an army camp at sunset:

[539]

> The plain on which they had encamped was vaster than the mind's eye could measure. Except for that hill on which he stood, there were no elevations or declivities; no roots to trip or confound the foot; not a stone to discomfit the eye. It looked like a calm sea that every breeze had spared. The boundaries of heaven and earth were united by lips of love; lip to lip they were joined like the parts of fitted basketry. It appeared as though it would hurt them to separate, that they had entered a vow not to part.[5]

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Talking for the sake of talking is another oral outlet of which the Amhara is generally fond. "In every country," remarked Arnauld d'Abbadie, "the plowman is miserly and sly; but the Ethiopian is, in addition, particularly loquacious."[6] The simple greeting of acquaintances evokes a barrage of ritualistic conversation, a phenomenon which stunned the Englishman Harris:

[596]

> Even two old crones, who are obviously tottering on the very brink of the grave, and who are afflicted with every pain and with every sorrow entailed by the fall of our first parents, never meet in the street without indulging in a string of good wishes which are reiterated so long as their breath will permit. "How are you? How do ye do? How have you passed your time? Are you well? Are you very well? Are you quite well? Are you perfectly well? Are you not well?"—are questions which serve as the prelude to a thousand other interrogatories; and at each response the Deity must be invoked as to the unadulterated happiness and perfect felicity that has been unremittingly experienced since the last meeting.[7]

A number of other conventions provide further opportunities for this pleasure in talking. Anecdotes and gossip are not merely reported, but are expounded at length with the aid of colorful expressions and gestures. Riddle games are enjoyed by adults as well as young people. Men vie with one another at length in a semiformalized kind of playful boasting. In the church schools all reading is done aloud, a habit which persists among many students of secondary schools when they study outside of class.

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A related pleasure in making sounds for their own sake appears in the Amhara's delight in repeating the words or nonsense syllables of his folk songs. On a more refined level, there is his evident pleasure in lulling over and savoring the lines of a choice couplet. We have here for a whole culture an instance of what Brill has ascribed to the poets:

> Poetry is a sensuous or mystic outlet through words, or, as it were, through a chewing and sucking of nice words and phrases. The poet plays with the

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rhythm and rhyme of words as an epicure with a palatable viand or intoxicating old wine. . . . Like the infant, his affective state can only be pacified through a rhythmical expression of pleasurable sounds.[8]

The Amharic language itself registers a certain sensibility to the nature of poetry as an oral outlet. Agreeable and pleasing language is characterized in Amharic by the same word which is used to characterize particularly pleasing food: "*tāfata*" ("it is sweet"). The introduction to the *Chronicles* of Emperor Galawdewos is but the literary embellishment of a type of statement which could be made by any Amhara:

> We commence here this beautiful narrative, of more pleasing taste to the mouth . . . than honey and sugar, which will bring pleasure to those who hear it and will give, to those who understand it, a joy like that given by song and wine.[9]

The incorporation of knowledge no less than the enjoyment of words is conceived in explicitly oral terms in Amharic. The stomach is regarded as the seat of wisdom, and in the language of schoolboys the diligent student is one who has thoroughly "drunk his lesson." The experiencing of one's school as an Alma Mater is probably quite intense; as one tenth-grade student wrote in a contribution to his school newspaper, "Oh! Mother School! There is nothing like school! As a mother feeds her children with milk and bread, so does a school feed her children, the pupils, with education."[10]

Eating and drinking for their own sake, beyond what is required for nutrition, form perhaps the most obvious medium for oral erotism, and one that is cultivated to a notable degree among the Amhara. Feasting is called for on every possible occasion—christenings, funerals, and memorial services, as well as engagements, weddings, and annual holidays. The chief purpose of the only voluntary association in traditional Amhara society, the religious fraternal association known as the *māhebar,* is to eat and drink in honor of a certain saint on his day every month. The duration of any large celebration is said to depend on how long the food and drink last; successful ones go on for three days. Linguistic usage stresses the oral function on such occasions. One "eats at," rather than attends, a christening party; one "drinks in," rather than belongs to, a *māhebar;* one expects to "eat at," rather than dance at, somebody's wedding. The very word for Easter, "*Fāsiqā,*" literally means "great feast."

The activity of eating is colored by a number of conventions which express its great emotional significance. The mood at mealtime is supposed to be deeply serious. Food is to be masticated aloud, indicating a total involvement with the task at hand. Not to let others hear one chewing, like eating by oneself, also is taken to imply greed. The usual obligation to stand when somebody enters the room is waived when one is eating. "Grain is king," says an

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

Amharic proverb, and even the Emperor when visiting a school expects students to remain seated if they are at the dining table when he arrives.

Some indication of the comparative significance of this concern about eating and drinking in the Amhara psyche is afforded by a recent cross-cultural investigation of dreams. Obtained from samples of young male respondents in Ethiopia, Nigeria, and the United States, the dreams were evaluated with respect to the presence or absence of themes of "manifest orality": scenes of someone desiring, looking for, or consuming food or drink. The proportion of Ethiopian respondents (mostly Orthodox Amhara from the Gondar area) who revealed manifest orality in their dreams was found to be *64 per cent.* By contrast, the proportion of those in a sample of non-Muslim Nigerians whose dreams showed manifest orality was 38 per cent, and that in the sample of Americans was only 22 per cent.[11]

The Amhara custom of giving *gurshā* plays up the erotic component of eating. *Gurshā* means "mouthful" and, as already noted, refers to a wad of food which one places in another's mouth, usually as a gesture of affection. *Gurshā* are exchanged between husband and wife and among relatives and friends. They are often given to children, especially in families of higher status, and to favored servants and retainers as well. The *gurshā* is of such meaning in Amhara experience that it is referred to in a number of Amharic idioms. First of all it means a present or a tip—literally, *pourmanger*. It also refers to the charge of a gun: the gun is a beloved object, and a *gurshā* is what one places in its mouth. In contemporary usage, it refers to flashlight batteries.

In connection with love and many other subjects, a good deal of the imagery of Amharic verse relates in one way or another to eating and drinking. The following sample of proverbs and couplets may convey some of the flavor of this phenomenon:

Ṭajj• has no specks; a poor man has no friends.

• • •

[Use] proverbs in conversation; [drink] *ṭajj* in a carafe.

• • •

Hand and fly-whisk; mouth and *ĭnjarā*† [go together].

• • •

No matter how much one plows, nothing tastes so good as *goman*.‡

• *Ṭajj*, it may be remembered, is the Ethiopian wine made of honey.

† *Ĭnjarā* is the staple pancake.

‡ *Goman* is a kind of cabbage plant that requires no plow cultivation.

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To make me forget you, this medicine is right:
Food and water, sleep and the night.

• • •

Love and porridge must be taken while hot;
Once cool, those who would taste are a lot.

• • •

The *ǐnjarā* I have, my lass;
I wait for you the *wat*• to pass.†

• • •

Your father and your mother have vowed to keep from meat;
But you, their very daughter, innards do you eat.‡

Eating and drinking provide expressive symbolism in social interaction as well as in verse. They form the primary axis of social life among the Amhara. The exchange of *gurshā* is but a specialized form of the general pattern of expressing sociability through feeding and being fed. Camaraderie consists to a large extent of eating from the same *ǐnjarā* basket, and the etymology of the word for "friend," *bālīnjarā,* is the same as that for the English "companion," someone with whom one shares bread. At any indoor gathering barley beer is served continuously. The visit of a guest at any time of day calls for "a little coffee," a euphemism for as much food and drink as the host can command. In some Amhara areas a special kind of spirit, the *ţonin,* is assigned the specific task of punishing persons who infringe the etiquette of dispensing and receiving food.[12]

From this it is but a short step to politics and morals. The production of large banquets is one of the essential arts of government in Abyssinia—*panem,* if not *circenses.* The stature of a big man depends partly upon the number of persons who customarily dine at his expense. A man's Christianity, moreover, is judged by his generosity in feeding others, a virtue that is eulogized at times by parading his *ǐnjarā* baskets around the field. A truly Christian Amhara is known by the regularity and scale with which he prepares memorial feasts for his departed kin, drinks in some religious fraternal association, and holds an annual feast (*zǐkr*) in which food is distributed to the poor.

Oral activity is prominent, moreover, not only as a primary source of

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• *Wat* is the sauce in which the *ǐnjarā* is dipped.

† The gold meaning is: "I'll wait for you until the others leave."

‡ "To eat someone's innards" is an idiom meaning: "to make him fall in love." The gold meaning is thus: "You made me love you."

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

pleasure among the Amhara, but also as a typical response to situations which arouse anxiety. The crisis of death is met first of all by a prolonged ritual of wailing, and this is followed by a series of memorial feasts which occur on fixed days following the person's death. Any kind of bad news evokes repeated exclamations of "Ay! Ay!" When a child or wife is punished, the response is a prolonged and monotonous yell usually out of proportion to the actual pain felt. In the anxious hour before battle, war chants and boastful cries tune up the warriors' spirits. Moments of great awe, finally, such as the appearance of the holy ark when it is brought out of the church or the arrival of some great political personage, occasion a shrill ululation.

Response to illness was the anxiety area chosen as an index of positive fixation by Whiting and Child in their cross-cultural study of *Child Training and Personality*. They assumed that a fixation on oral gratification would express itself in a preference for therapies which involve swallowing something.[13] In this area, too, Amhara culture displays a preoccupation with orality, and not just in the form of swallowing. Something akin to a general principle for oral therapy appears in the well-known Amharic proverb: "For headache, shout on it! For stomach-ache, eat on it!"

A number of the oral therapies practiced by the Amhara are naturally functional, such as drinking a purgative made from leaves of the *kosso* tree to cure tapeworm, or eating a kind of unleavened corn bread to arrest dysentery. Beyond this, most of their magical therapies are also oral. Drinking holy water (and sometimes bathing in it) is believed to cure nearly every sort of affliction, from rheumatism and leprosy to eye and ear ailments. In some regions it is believed that eating the liver of a hyena will cure syphilis. Psychotherapy, too, often relies on oral remedies: the *zār* on a patient is often placated by feeding him, via the patient, a sumptuous meal. Oral types of prophylaxis are also to be noted. Garlic is eaten in order to prevent malaria. Certain kinds of animals are eaten on special occasions in order to ward off sickness. Finally, there is the remarkable phenomenon of the *lālibalā*, a night singer, who can protect himself against hereditary leprosy only by singing out loud in the night air.

In general, one can say that the Amhara have a tendency to attribute magical efficacy to oral incorporation and, to a lesser extent, to the adroit use of language. The latter belief appears in the assumption that human problems are solved by attaining some particularly fortunate verbal formulation, and in the association of outstanding wisdom with unusual mastery of language. The former appears in beliefs and legends which associate eating a lot with the attainment of unusual bravery, longevity, and physical strength. A legend about the invader Ahmad Grāñ, for example, relates that as a baby he was able to consume fourteen bowls of *ǐnjarā* at one sitting. A num-

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

ber of Amhara folk tales, moreover, have as their central theme the resolution of conflict or the attainment of mastery over the environment by means of eating something or presenting food to someone.[14] It is a theme conspicuous in the legend which celebrates the ascendance of the first of the Shoan Amhara emperors, Yekuno Amlāk (1270–85). According to *The Book of the Riches of Kings,* Yekuno Amlāk ate by chance the head of a rooster which had been set out for a king of the rival Zāgwē Dynasty:

> And this youth Yakuno Amlak found the head of the cock which the woman had left by the fire-place, and he took it and ate it, and it filled his belly, and it made him an exalted person and so mighty a man that he was superior to every other man of might, and it made his face to shine like the light of the sun, and his majesty filled all the other servants of the king with awe, and all the people feared him, and they marvelled at him, and they loved him exceedingly, and they placed him in their hearts, and they recognized that the grace of God was upon him, and they said, "What is the thing which hath come upon this young man?"[15]

Oral Sadism

In addition to subserving a passive, receptive mode of relating to the environment, preoccupation with the oral zone also figures in Amhara culture as the locus of a variety of aggressive modes of behavior and fantasy. Hostility is expressed by a number of oral gestures. Sticking out the tongue and spitting on the ground in front of somebody, for example, are two forms of non-verbal insult. Biting the lower lip is an indication of anger. Touching the tongue, and then forehead, chin, and cheeks, signifies "You just wait!" When fighting, men sometimes bite one another's ears. The activation of a strong biting impulse in situations of military combat is suggested by the following refrain from an Amhara martial declaration, recorded over a century ago:

> Oh brothers, you are hungry and thirsty! Oh true sons of my mother,
> Are you not birds of prey? Come on! There is the enemy's flesh.
> And I, I will be the rider to butcher for you! Forward,
> And if you lack hydromel, I will give you my blood to drink.[16]

The theme of cannibalism appears in various forms in the Amhara imagination. One of the common subjects of traditional Amhara painting is the story of the cannibal Balaya Sab. His name is in Ge'ez, and means "Eater of Men." The story about him derives from one of the old legends collected in *The Miracles of the Blessed Virgin Mary.*[17] Balaya Sab was a wicked man who fed on the flesh of humans. At his death he appeared before St. George, who measured his evil deeds against his good deeds on a large scale. On the side of evil deeds were placed the souls of all those he had eaten, so heavy a weight that the devil began to make ready to carry him off to hell. Then

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

Mary intervened, placing on the empty side for good deeds a goblet of water which Balaya Sab had once given to a sick beggar out of pity; and the Eater of Men was saved. In the pictorial representation of this legend, Balaya Sab is portrayed cutting off pieces of human flesh with a curved knife in the manner in which raw beef is attacked at the Amhara table.

Most Amhara know some sort of tale about a cannibal. The topic is familiar enough that they are able to invent new ones. One boy told me he made up the following story to explain the nature of cannibals to his younger brother:

> Once there was a cannibal. He lived among many people. He had no food in his house; he was poor. But even if he had not been poor, he just liked to eat the flesh of man. In his house was a big hole which he covered with a carpet. He would invite somebody into his house and tell him to sit down on the chair over the hole. When the person sat down and fell into the hole, he would climb down by a ladder and eat him. In this way he ate all the people in his village one by one—about a hundred people. When he had eaten all the people in his village he returned to live in the forest, because there was nobody left to eat.

The cannibal motif appears in more subtle form in the parlor game known as *gabatā*, in which the aim is to accumulate as many pebbles as possible by moving them around a board with six holes on each side. In *gabatā* the active acquisition of pebbles is called "eating" and the passive acquisition is "drinking." Similarly, those who play chess or checkers refer to the process of taking a man as "eating" him. It is notable, moreover, that the Amhara version of the old riddle about how to transport a certain number of incompatible objects across the river in one boat is posed in terms of three human beings and three cannibals.

Oral sadism is further manifest among the Amhara by the nature of their speech. The Amhara are not only loquacious but also tend, both in manner of delivery and in content of conversation, to be biting and intrusive. Backbiting, insulting, arguing, and litigating are among their more characteristic modes of self-expression.

Backbiting and insulting, and the fear of being the victim of such activities, are the focus of much attention in Amhara culture. Concern about the former is expressed in a number of Amharic proverbs:

> If the mouth lacks work, it will backbite a friend.
>
> If you praise a man once, you will be in trouble if you backbite him later.
>
> If a man is a backbiter, listen for my sake when he talks to you.

Straightforward insults erupt the polite surface of Amhara social relations only under unusually heated circumstances, though it is customary for social superiors to direct a certain amount of abusive banter at their inferiors as

11:Levine, Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

of moral pressure for the reconciliation of conflict, it appears to place greater emphasis on the acting out of aggression. It does this, first of all, by defining a number of acts as offenses which justify violent retribution of some sort. Appropriation of one's land, seduction of one's wife, and injury of one's relatives are acts of this nature, and it is incumbent on the offended party to seek personal revenge or, as the Amhara put it, "to return the debt" (*bedder mammalas*). It is considered shameful to remain passive when so affronted, an attitude expressed in the following couplet:

Balaw ba-dimotfar daggmaw ba-wānzā,
Bābbāt rïstennā yallam bamïst wāzzā.

Shoot him with the dimotfar,* get him again with a wanza,*
Taking your father's land or your wife away, that is no joking matter.

Aggressiveness is further encouraged by the Amhara ego ideal of masculinity.[13] The identity of Amhara males is very much bound up with their capacity for aggressiveness, by both violent and verbal means. A man who has killed someone is regarded with a certain amount of veneration, and the act of killing is itself praised in verses such as:

Saw gadlu saw gadlu: saw magdal yebajāl,
Saw yālgadala saw sihĕd yāngolājāl.

Kill a man! Kill a man! It is good to kill a man!
One who has not killed a man moves around sleepily.

Similarly, verbal aggression is encouraged by the inclusion of excellence at litigation and insulting in the domain of proper male behavior.[14] The bestowal of insults is a rather stylized, if dangerous, procedure among the Amhara. According to Amhara customary law, insulting is a legal offense. The new criminal code provides for a gradation of penalties according to the seriousness of the insult, including fines which run from Eth$15 to as much as hundreds of dollars. The most serious insults include *bāryā* ("slave"); *ṭayb* ("evil-eyed artisan"); and *qomātā* ("leper"). Insults of lesser to medium degrees of seriousness include the following:

hodām	"greedy" (literally, "bellied")
wafrām	"fat"
saḳārām	"drunkard"
quashāshā	"dirty"
amadām	"scaly-faced" (literally, "ashen")

* Types of rifles.

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

older or more prestigious males are addressed as *gāshē* ("my shield"); the corresponding term for females is *etēyē* ("my sister"). Much older people are addressed by words signifying "father" or "mother."

It is true that the forms of respect toward superiors are often repeated mechanically and sometimes serve to cover up a distinctly hostile disposition toward certain superiors. They nevertheless do represent to some extent a genuine solidaristic sentiment—perhaps the most profound and influential social sentiment in the Amhara social system. It rests in the last analysis on the fact that the Amhara family develops a pronounced sense of filial devotion as well as habits of filial obedience. Amhara society can dispense with horizontal solidarities and communal attachments because it is held together, sufficiently for traditional purposes, at least, by an infinite network of "father-son" relationships.

The egoistic element in the hierarchical pattern is further modified by a sort of joking relationship that sometimes develops between inferiors and superiors. The harsh interrogation of inferiors at times shades into a sort of wry banter; sons or servants may be called "thief" or "scoundrel" in an undertone of unmistakable affection. At times, moreover, the direction of the jesting may be reversed. Amhara servants are noted for playing practical jokes on their masters, which the latter usually appreciate when the jests are clever.[21] Here again, wax and gold is the perfect medium—for expressing aggression against a superior while at the same time appearing to maintain the respect relationship. The following couplet, attributed to Naggādrās Tassamā Eshatē, aptly illustrates this genre:

Ennānta maḳuānnentotch ba-mīn wat balātchu?
Eññām ba-shurwātchen ennāntam bāssātchu.

What sauce, my lords, was on your plate?
We had but peas; 'twas fish you ate.[22]

Here the poet appears to be complimenting the nobles on their more elegant cuisine at a banquet; but there is a pun on the word *bāssātchu,* literally "with your fish," for it may also be taken to mean "you took more than your share."

Within the hierarchical pattern, finally, one finds expressed a certain amount of generosity which, as we have suggested, is relatively uncommon in relations among peers. This appears in connection with the *begging* and *almsgiving* which occur in many sectors of Amhara society. For church students beyond the elementary level, begging is the primary means of livelihood. Youths who have left home to study *zēmā* or *qenē* with a master wander about today, as in former times, carrying small baskets and pleading: "For the sake of Mary! For the sake of God!" in order to get their daily morsels. The activity is so organized that when a large number of students

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proverb which stresses the rights of women in this regard gives the following advice:

Balāgar sitagab yematāl ba-degger;
Tayawennā nay qitāwen yegāgger.

When a peasant gets sated he beats you with wood;
Leave and come home, let him bake his own bread!

A couple who have firmly decided upon divorce need simply call in their relatives or go before the *çhĭqā shum* in order to have their property properly divided. The only recourse to judicial process is when, as often happens, disputes break out concerning the division of property. In the *damoz* form of marriage, in which there is no civil oath, divorce is yet simpler. The wife is given certain presents and a monthly salary for the duration of the marriage. When the husband has to leave for another part of the country, or if the couple quarrel, they simply separate without further ado.

Despite its heavy claim on the energies of its members, then, the Amhara kinship system is such as to make members of the nuclear family relatively independent of extended relationships, and to give the individual marriage partners important areas of independence from each other.

Religious Organization

Membership in the Monophysite Church is automatic for all Amhara except a small percentage who are Muslim. This membership is symbolized by the ceremony of baptism, performed for male infants on the fortieth day and for females on the eightieth. At that time the child receives a special Christian name in addition to his regular family name.

Certain obligations are incumbent upon every member of the church. Foremost among these is the requirement of fasting, which begins for children of both sexes at about the age of seven and introduces a considerable element of constraint into the lives of the Amhara. Second, there is the obligation to observe the Sabbaths and the main holidays by refraining from arduous physical labor on those days. In addition, each household is obliged to contribute a certain quantity of grain to the local church every year.*

Apart from the rigorous fasting requirements, and the injunction not to work on holy days—a dubious hardship—the individual is relatively free of ritual obligations. The rituals demanded by the church are so manifold, and so sacred, that responsibility for them is given to the clergy, and the laymen

* In some areas this is a fixed amount per household (e.g., one or two *quana*); in others it is proportionate to the wealth of the family. It is collected by a lay official of the church, the *gend alaqā*, though sometimes by the *gabaz*.

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*121 538 156 [126] sinuate insults through the ambiguities of his compliments, as was illustrated above. *Shĭllalā,* declaimed to arouse male courage before battle, is also heard at weddings and other festive occasions. Another type of exclamatory verse (*ho-berē*) is sung by the peasant at harvest time as he drives his cattle around the threshing floor. Verse of sorrow (*engurguro*) is intoned at time of bereavement or during moments of loneliness. Finally, in the conviviality of a drink-house enlivened by a minstrel, alone at work, or with a group of friends on various occasions, the Amhara finds that verse provides a medium for thoughts on almost any subject—people, places, animals, weather, love, work, and death. The following poem illustrates an important quality found in many of these verses, pessimism and irony, especially common in verses about love.

[539] Fish on the cliff, baboons in the sea;
The ass after honey, while hay draws the bee;
On a baking-pan of wax, butter to see;
Or a monk from Zegamel monastery
In the pagan land of Metcha to bury;
With an unsuited person in love to be;
Thus has it ended, my affair with thee.
Leave it, forget it, just let it rest—
A hapless ass at a hyena's breast.

[533] [534] These various sorts of verse may be either sung or spoken. The auditory effect is often enhanced by the accompaniment of musical instruments. When serious *qenē* has been recited by its author in church, it is usually repeated by a chorus of *dabtarā* singing to the slow beat of drums and sistrums. The sad strains of *engurgo* are sometimes accompanied by the mellow ten-stringed lyre, while an instrumental background for livelier subjects may be provided by the Abyssinian banjo or one-stringed violin.

Throughout these varieties of verse forms, certain conventions are followed. Most important, the lines are supposed to rhyme; that is, end with the same consonant-plus-vowel. Inferior poets achieve this rhyme at the expense of the words they use. In addition, proper rhythm must be maintained; the lines must not "break." This means that the flow of the line must be smooth and that the metrical pattern in one line—based on the number of accents, not syllables[84]—should be paralleled by the others. A poet who breaks his lines is satirized by being dubbed a "lion."

While observing these rules—and, in the case of *qenē,* the much more complicated rules pertaining to stanza forms and poetic figures—the Amhara poet *must also be original.* In the production of verse, individuality is explicitly emphasized. Poets who use verses composed by others—this is primarily true of students of *qenē*—are insulted with the term *lēbā* ("thief"). Similarly, a poet should not repeat himself. If he repeats the same word

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121 nally, data were gathered relating to the modes of acquiring, exercising, validating, and conserving powers of prophylaxis, diagnosis, and therapy. Here, as in the other areas of data gathering, a necessary distinction was made between the perceptions of practitioners and those of their clients.

*793 869 75 197 • 539 * 793 114 127 While the secular medical traditions of Ethiopia are exclusively oral, powerful cleric healers known as debteras have traditionally employed diagnositc, prophylactic, and therapeutic texts written in Ge'ez, the language of the Church, and in the vernacular. Numerous debtera texts gave been collected in the libraries of Europe and the United States, and valuable translations, most notably by Marcel Griaule, Deborah Lifchitz, and Stefan Strelcyn, have been published. These published translations, together with translations made in the field with the assistance of clerics, have been utilized in the writing of those sections of Chapter Four dealing with the debtera's medical texts.

121 171 Although the focus of this dissertation is limited to the region in which field research was conducted, it should not be overlooked that the Amhara share important cultural affinities with peoples, now largely Islamic, occupying lands extending from the eastern Mediterranean to the Persian Gulf.

000 The highlands of Begemder, Tigre, and Eritrea form

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17 peoples who penetrated deep into the highlands, making many converts among the Christians. Even after the defeat of the Muslim armies in the sixteenth century and the subsequent rennaisance of the Ethiopian polity, relations with the Islamic world persisted, augmented now by the presence of Abyssinian Muslims permanently settled in the highlands.

*755 *787 *793 177 Within the context of Ethiopian medicine, these widespread cultural affinities are most obvious in the works of the cleric healer (the debtera), and in the practices of the zar possession cult. For example, in their numerological operations, the debtera's divinatory texts repeat the gematria manipulations of the Kabbalah, while the ideology which rationalized these formulations clearly reiterates the astrological lore of Islamic sa- 177 vants. Similarly, affinities are obvious between Ethio- 778 pian and Islamic amulets, in their construction, in the design of talismanic devices, and in the ends for which *757 they are manufactured. Nor is evidence of the transla- 177 tion of Islamic medical treatises into Ge'ez and Amharic • 539 lacking. Here, however, these works, particularly regarding humoral theory, have enjoyed only a very limited diffusion, and have been subordinated to indigenous medi- *787 cal notions. Finally, the zar cult, in whose coteries many of Begemder's women belong, is no local phenomenon, but appears in one form or another throughout this entire culture area.

* 753 pitiated with zar-favored foodstuffs. Because of this,
776 they are loosely associated with the zars. Unlike the
782 latter, however, they are vague phantoms with whom no
* [755] communication is possible; their demands are known from
* [192] convention and, once satiated, leave the sickman permanently.

776 Zars contrast with ganels in several significant
779 respects. The zar lives in a world which parallels but is distinct from man's own; it is a world whose existence, together with that of the zars themselves, is denied by
* [192] the Coptic Church. The ganel's existence is entirely earth-bound, and he is identified by the Church as the Abyssinian satan (seytan). Whereas it is the zar which initiates ties with his human host, the ganel is forced into such relationships by his human partner. The zar's host may be anyone, the ganel's partner is always a male ecclesiastic who possesses a store of esoteric knowledge.

* 753 The ganel's appearance is known from scriptural
776 references and, in addition, they are infrequently seen.
• [539] When visible, the ganel appears as a tall and thin black-
* [192] man, Nilotic except for certain details. Descriptions by laymen are generally hearsay, since madness (ibidet) strikes the unprotected human who looks on a ganel; if the glance is returned, the effects are mortal. So dangerous is the ganel's person that even contact with his shadow leaves the victim stammering and given over to

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*793 ensorcelling spells and rituals is mainly limited to certain debteras, the Coptic scholars among whom the
*755 ganel's human intimates are also found. Since laymen
• 539 are generally illiterate and unfamiliar with the litur-
[212] gical language (Ge'ez) in which spells are composed, they are unable to master the long lists of magical names and injunctions which are associated with powerful spells. Consequently, although laymen occasionally own ensorcelling spells and rituals, these spells are generally abbreviated and invariably weak. In addition, lay-owned spells and rituals are usually obtained from questionable sources, since the layman is unlikely to possess a medium appropriate for "purchasing" such knowledge.

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754 Human illness-causing powers may be inherited or congenital, as well as learned. In Begemder Province, inherited powers are limited to budas, Falasha wer-hyenas. The buda's dangerous abilities reach full potency after pubescence, when the hyenas' nocturnal cries compel him to spend the night with them feasting upon disinterred human cadavers. At dawn, the buda returns home, assuming a benign demeanor until his morbid attentions are
[826] fixed upon a living victim. Many of these are persons
*[192] of "good blood" (tiruw dem sew), individuals who have inherited the light and unblemished complexion favored by Amhara, although other attractive physical features

tera. They are described, in terms of their constituent elements and operational goals.

"Herbal" therapies. Pharmacologically, the debtera's therapies are, with an exception, indistinguishable from those of the secular herbalists. Indeed, where possible, the debtera obtains new therapies from obliging secular therapists, setting them down in a book he keeps for this purpose (yisowat himem medhaniyt meshav, or hivri'i isowat). In contrast to the therapies practiced by secular herbalists, however, the debtera often supplements otherwise prosaic therapies with exotic, non-botanical ingredients (for example, owl's wing, hair from a lion's mane, blood of sheep's spleen), often employed in fumitories and libations.

Digam and Kitab. The digam is a syncretic invocation constructed from passages extracted from the Old Testament (particularly Psalms), the New Testament (particularly the Gospels), zeyma (the litanies of the Mass), and devotional books dedicated to the saints (the lives of the Saints, the Images of the Saints); asmat, magical power derived from the secret names of Jesus and the Almighty; and requests for specific assistance.

From an operational point of view, each digam communicates five messages. 1) The digam indicates the supernaturals to whom the appeal is directed. An address

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to the Father, Son, Holy Spirit and their essential oneness[26] inevitably begins the text. Subsequently, Jesus, Mary, persons of the Old and New Testaments, and angels by name, singly or in combination, are cited. 2) The digam indicates the misfortune-bearing agent against which the assistance is sought. These are identified as either a category of agents (for example, ganels, budas, sorcerers), or as specific, named agents (generally individual ganels). The digam also frequently indicates specific misfortunes against which protection is asked. Although a causal link is assumed, between the agents and ailments mentioned in the digam, the link is made explicit in only a minority of cases, as, for example, when the ganel Sowtaley is associated with childhood aynitila (pica). 3) The digam further notes the power of the supplicant's supernatural protector to bring about the desired ends. This power, traced to the Almighty, is described in numinous allusions, each as "By the strength of Your names," "He who slays, heals, makes life," "Inextinguishable Light," "Omnipotent," "Fortress," "Conquerer of Evil". Similarly, this power may be associated with analogous precedents. For example,

[6]Reflecting the monophysite character of the Ethiopian Coptic Church.

[TEXT CONTINUED ON PAGE 161]

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TABLE 8

ABINET CATEGORIES AND ACTIVITIES

1. Abinet Categories

Key:

x=always present (x)=frequently present o=absent

	CONSTITUENT ELEMENTS					
	"Herbal Therapy"	Digam Read	Digam Write	Telsem	Manipulation of text	Other
Abinet						
A. Debtera therapy (preparation)	x	x	o	o	o	o
B. Kitab amulet (preparation)	(x)	(x)	x	x	o	o
C. Awdunigist divination	o	o	o	o	x	o
D. Academic abinet	(x)	(x)	o	o	o	o
E. Other commercial, inoffensive works	o	x	o	o	o	x
F. Kifat destructive works	o	x	o	o	o	x
G. Ganel-calling	o	x	o	o	o	x

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hemorrhaging is countered with the reference "As you curdled the might of the wind and hale," protection from the buda's eye is sought with "As you saved Joseph from the clutches of evil brigands," assistance in learning and memory notes "As You enlightened the heart (i.e., seat of the intellect) of Moses and loosened the bonds of his tongue". 4) The digam includes a petition for either an intrinsic improvement (e.g., "Illuminate my heart like the sun," "Uncover the eyes of my memory"), for his protection from external dangers ("Save me," "Conceal me"), or for the diminution of his oppressors (e.g., "Disperse my enemies," "Cast them out as anathema"). 5) Finally, the supplicant is identified as faithful to the Trinity, and abject but for the assistance he asks.

In the abstract, debteras consider a digam to be equally efficacious whether it is recited or written. In a practical context, however, the contrast between the written and recited digam is significant. Since the debtera's public is overwhelmingly illiterate, they are unable to read a digam, as the debtera does. The problem of memorizing even one lengthy digam, let alone the three, four or more that the peasant carries in his kitabs (amulets), makes memorization an unlikely alternative from the client's point of view. The debtera, for his part, sees the sale of a written digam as professionally a very different act from selling a text for

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recitation. The first is a professional service provided for a client, the second marks a loss of professional capital, since the erstwhile client would then be free to transmit this knowledge to still other clients of the debtera. Thus, it is only the debtera himself who recites the digam; his recitations are generally adjuncts to the preparation of herbal therapies and the gathering or processing of ingredients which will be included in a kitab.

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From a medical point of view, the contrast between written and recited digam is equally important. First, there is the matter of the duration of a digam's effectiveness. In general, a recited digam must be spoken aloud daily, lest its efficacy be interrupted. The effects of the written digam, on the other hand, are continuous, so long as the text remains legible and the digam is renewed annually. Once a digam has been sewn into its kitab, it cannot be removed without losing its potency. Thus, the digam's legibility is known only indirectly, and is assumed to remain legible unless made wet; once exposed to water, it is considered no longer effective. The owner of a kitab guarantees its continued potency by burying it for a twenty-four hour period, beginning on the eve of the new year, generally beneath his threshhold. Necessary cautions aside, the effective life span of certain kitabs is sometimes no more than seven

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or nine years, depending upon the debtera's recipe. Since a digam customarily includes the name of the supplicant, the usefulness of the kitab ends with the death of its owner.

Second, the recited digam derives its efficacy from a single, verbal, dimension. In contrast, the effect of a digam written into a kitab is amplified by a variety of non-textual elements. When written, the digam's script is most often set down from left to right, in the conventional direction of written Amharic and Ge'ez. Occasionally, however, a recipe indicates that the digam's effects can be better achieved if produced in another format, particularly a circular one. Another graphic device is the appearance of a telsem, a talismanic drawing appropriate to text, together with the written digam. The very materials which are used to set down digam and telsem are chosen and combined to maximize the achievement of the desired goal. The debtera must apply details regarding both the animal source of the parchment on which the digam is written (e.g., antelope, he-goat) and its dimensions, for it is often required that the parchment be tailored to the client's height. The composition and color of the ink used are a further concern. The text is generally copied in some combination of the sebat kolmat ("seven colors": pigments of red, blue, black, yellow, brown, new grass green, leaf green) which have

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been mixed together with other ingredients (such as sacramental oil, juice or sap, animal blood or urine). The recipe further states which segments of the text (e.g., asmat) are to be represented in a contrasting [824] color (usually red). Finally, the botanical variety of reed with which the text is written may be determined also.

Beyond the effects gained from the manufacture of the digam itself, the text's goals are further augmented by materials which are included in the kitab, together [237] with the digam. These include, as indicated by the debtera's recipe, botanicals, often together with such exotic ingredients as a designated number of hairs from a lion's mane. The outer cover of the kitab is made of leather, but a debtera must determine if it should come from a wild or domestic animal, and, if the latter, what its sex and color should be. The digam is sewn into this, but whether the stitch should be to the right or to the left, whether the thread should be cotton or silk, and what its color should be, must also be con- [801] sidered first. The number of stitches to be made is likewise relevant, for numerological considerations suffuse the entire process of making the kitab. Nor are the makers of the kitab neglected; whether the debtera should be sexually continent before writing the digam, whether the cord by which the kitab is worn should be

woven by a virgin or a post-menopausal woman, are frequently relevant questions. Before giving the kitab to his client, the debtera may find it useful to recite a digam over it, perhaps accompanying this recitation with some activity, such as walking a designated numberof circuits around a church. Finally, the knowledgeable debtera can prescribe the part of the client's body where the kitab will work most effectively, on the arm, around the neck, at the groin or arm pit, whether right side or left.

Although laymen recite prayers which are analogous to the debtera's digams, they are exclusively verbal and without asmat. Amhara customarily pray on retiring and waking; there are also occasional prayers after meals. Prayers at home are always performed by individuals, and are directed to the Almighty, Jesus, Mary, and the saints of the Church. Prayers to the Almighty either thank Him for fulfilling requests made in previous prayers, or ask for special favors. The layman asks for protection from imminent danger and unknown enemies, for injury to those hostile to him, for wealth (especially land), good fortune, and long life; his most frequent request, however, is that his good health and that of other members of his household be maintained or restored. Prayers to saints are usually to Kidus Makael, Kidus Yowhanis, Kidus Gebre Menfis, and, particularly, the eponymous saint of the

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869 Students who are more advanced in abinet studies consider the novice's acquisitions to be trivial and inocuous, because their goals are modest and they lack significant asmat. The young kiyne student, however, puzzles over whether these studies involve the coercion of supernaturals of the Church, instead of the humble and supplicatory attitude he wishes to express. Thus, the student often grows uneasy concerning these first acquisitions, and many, unable to reconcile their material and moral interests, go no further in their abinet studies. For the others, however, the pragmatic advantages of the abinet continue to stimulate their acquisitive interests. Once more, the student regards his powerlessness, his lack of mundane protectors and less controversial alternatives, to be particularly important; here, he considers it to legitimize the use of minor abinet. The student supports this perspective by emphasizing that the abinet are confined to his own immediate needs, and never used as a commercial service for others. Finally, by participating in the Mass and ecclesiastical scholarship, he expects to mitigate any taint acquired through these abinet activities.

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• 539 After one or two excursions into the lowlands, the young student who has already accomodated himself to the use of personal abinet comes to intensify his interest in prophylactic works, particularly digams. He seeks pro-

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*755 *787 *793 • 539 tection against ganels (but as a category of agents, rather than as named individuals), against the shifta bandit, and against the wild animals of the lowlands. The prophylactic abinet that he acquires, although short on asmat, perhaps lacking telsem, and with few magical [437] [241] features of manufacture, he works into kitabs. While the student's initial stimulus for collecting these abinet is his own immediate needs, he is nonetheless aware of the commercial value of such abinet, in the form of commercial services for lowland peasants.

*793 484 Relatively few experienced debteras pay visits to the kola lands. The lowlands, considered unhealthful and dangerous by highlanders in general, are still less appealing to the mature debtera. He deprecates them for the absence of ecclesiastical establishments, and fears them for what he believes to be the shifta's predilection *755 for robbing and murdering debteras.[27] In lieu of more *793 437 484 539 expert services, and attracted by the moderate costs, the lowlander is often anxious to purchase kitabs from visiting students. The students, in anticipation, prepare a score or more of kitabs before traveling to the lowlands;

[27] Debteras attribute the shifta's murderousness to his fear of subsequent magical revenge by the debtera.

a blank space is left on each kitab, to be filled in later with the client's name. In general, the student initially sells kitabs to the lowlands to assist him in gathering agricultural products. The kitabs are purchased with either crops or services, and only infrequently with money. The peasant's services include recommending the student's kitabs to his neighbors, safe storage of the goods which the student has collected, and lending draught animals to bring the student's sacks up to the highlands. Sometimes, enterprising students arrange their visits in order to obtain payment in cotton, a relatively valuable product which debtera students are unable to obtain otherwise.

The student's experience selling kitabs in the lowlands has a significant effect on the course of his subsequent abinet career. First, his abinet interests are redirected. His previous acquisitions were abinet which served an immediate personal interest, and whose commercial value was adventitious. These commercial successes, however small-scale, frequently stimulate the student to obtain abinet which have an exclusively commercial value. Interest in personally useful abinet by no means ends during this period, however; often it is accelerated by the student's changing attitudes to the practice of abinet. There is a tendency to now perceive his moral interests as less opposed to these works than he had pre-

is better able to obtain new abinet, since his own growing repertoire increases the possibility of arranging abinet exchanges with other debteras. Moreover he is better equiped to utilize them; he has learned much of the Ethiopian herbal pharmacopeia, and is able to identify botanicals by the Ge'ez nomers with which they are frequently designated in the recipes of abinet therapies and kitabs. Similarly, his mastery of Ge'ez makes possible the acquisition of complex digams.

In addition to acquiring individual recipes, debtera-healers also seek out encyclopaedic treatices. These are inventories of recipes, bearing Ge'ez titles such as "book of medicine for diseases for all parts of the body" (metshafe medhaniyt lekwiylown deweyate akalat). In these books, recipes are grouped according to diseases; the diseases are, in turn, classified according to the part of the body that they affect, arranged from head to feet. Stefan Strelcyn (1965), after close examination of four such manuscripts, has commented on the substantial uniformity of their contents and the remarkable similarities which they share with the third and fourth books of Avicenna's Canon of Medicine.

While such treatises contain hundreds of recipes, their significance for the practice of Abyssinian medicine is limited by the character of their pathogenic interests. As seen by his clients, the debtera's thera-

DIVINING WITH AWDUNIGIST

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• 539 More than anything, it is the ability to manipu-late awdunigist texts on behalf of a client that communi-cates a man's transition from an amulet writing student serving lowland peasants with a few simple kitabs, to a weak (tinis) debtera providing services to a highland
*[192] public. According to those debteras who have not accom-panied him along the abinet path, such a debtera has now become a "tonkway", a "seer" classified together with the heterodoxical and despised balazar, tarnished by the pro-scribed manipulation of supernatural powers. These clerics consider the use of awdunigist objectionable,

[778] [28]Written digams and kitabs are largely confined to contingencies for which the client carries the amulet on his person. A client's agricultural interests (for example, protection from locust, birds, and rodents), in contrast, are safeguarded otherwise. Here, the client's fields are often sprinkled with the debtera's infusion, over which digams have been read. In addition, a portion of the infusion is placed in a vessel and secreted among his fields, in order to secure sustained protection. Analogous abinet are worked for the client's other pro-perty interests (for example, safeguarding from theft).

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because it assumes that forces other than the Almighty can direct man's life on earth. In addition, assertions are sometimes made which link awdunigist to satanic origins and, with more justification, to offensive applications. The awdunigist-using debtera, however, generally ignores this theological question and regards these texts in an exclusively technical context.

During the years that a debtera accumulates the abinet works discussed in the preceeding section, he also acquires awdunigist texts. These texts are a variety of abinet, with which the debtera divines the client's real needs, present and future. Using awdunigist, the debtera is able to maximize his abinet resources, to select those works best suited to the client's revealed needs and most effective in concert with one another. Since the major part of the debtera's abinet services are prophylactic (mainly in the form of kitabs), and since the client's own divinatory techniques are relatively uninformative and often unreliable, it is the debtera himself who must generally prescribe prophylaxis. Thus, it is mainly through owning and manipulating awdunigist texts that the debtera enjoys the opportunity for the commercial exercise of his prophylaxes.

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Before describing the content and use of awdunigist texts, it is necessary to first consider lay divination through dreams, indicating both its practical limitations

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• 539 and its complementary relationship to consultation with the awdunigist-using debtera.

*787 The Hilimefoc. Dreams occur as either kijet or hilim. A hilim is an intelligible narrative whose prosaic events and recognizable persons, if properly interpreted, reveal useful information about the immediate future. In the kijet, bizarre happenings and strange actors frighten and distress the dreamer, and whose content yields no useful information. The lexicon of
*[192] hilims is public knowledge. However, older laymen of either sex, are considered more knowledgeable in this regard, and the title "hilimefoc" ("dream interpreter") is generally limited to them.

Hilims contain information about a variety of subjects, including prosperity or poverty, enmity and friendship, honor and respect, marriage and divorce, the birth of children, and changes in residence. Dominant among the themes appearing in hilims are questions regarding misfortune in general, and physical well-being in particular. A hilim message indicates, first, the character of the future event, and, second, the person to whom the message refers. Six specific events are relevant to an individual's medical interests: 1) specific ailment, 2) illness, 3) death by causes unspecified, 4) ganel-caused misfortune, 5) human danger, 6) unspecified misfortune.

*787 vide a stimulus for the layman to obtain the services of an awdunigist-using debtera; this is particularly true when messages are redundant or corroborated by other kinds of information. Appendix C provides examples of hilim motifs and messages.

*787 Infrequently, an ecclesiastical student who is beg-
*793 ging for food will deliver a spontaneous prediction (imeninant), before the house of a prospective donor.
*(192) These predictions duplicate the range of hilim messages, and refer to members of the household.

*787 The Awdunigist Texts. "Awdunigist" refers to a
*793 category of texts with which a debtera divines by means
• 539 of arithmetical calculations. Each text is divided into two parts. The first specifies information which is required for the debtera's calculations; the second contains the information which the debtera seeks, and is arranged as a series of numbered entries, only one of which is appropriate to the debtera's input information.

The categories of input information are:

*787 Names. Each letter of the Amharic syllabary is
*793 given a set numerical value, which like all input values,
539 remains constant for any awdunigist text used. Using
551 these numbers, the debtera converts each input name to the sum of the values of its constituent letters. Ego's autonym is almost always required; his father's autonym (which is ego's patrinym) and mother's autonym are fre-

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*787 *793 • 539 [551] quently required. Depending upon the contingency being investigated, the names of other individuals may also be included; for example, in divination concerning litigation, the judge's name is asked.

[805] *(192) Dates. The Amhara group years into cycles of four, naming each year after one of the four evangelists. Thus, 1956 is the year (zemene), of Yowhanis, 1957 of Matiyows, 1958 of Markows, 1959 of Luwkows, 1960 of Yowhanis, and so on. Each year is assigned a numerical value (for example, zemene Yowhanis is two). Months, days, and diurnal count (day is six, night is fourteen) each are numbered.

[823] Directions. Each of the eight cardinal and intermediary points is numbered.

The numerical values of all required input information are totaled, and this total is then divided by a factor indicated in the text. The debtera's goal is the numerical remainder of this division; it is this figure that indicates which of the text's numbered entires is relevant to the subject (that is, the person about whom the debtera is divining).

*787 *539 *(192) Broadly speaking, there are two categories of awdunigist texts. The first consists of largely redundant "astrological" (kokob) texts. These texts are based on the assumption that the course of any person's life on earth can be revealed by learning with which of twelve

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stars his destiny is linked.[29] For this, the debtera must know the subject's autonym, the year (zemene) and month of his birth, and whether he was born during the day or night; division is by twelve. Here, the text indicates both the name of the subject's star, and a variety of information relevant to all people who are bound to this star. Among this information, the following medical data figure prominently: 1) Prophylactic and diagnostic notations specifying the ailments and pathogenic agents which threaten the subject; 2) prophylactic notations regarding the manufacture of the kitab, its appropriate digam (indicated by generic title), and the construction of an effective telsem most appropriate to the subject; 3) therapeutic notations regarding pharmacology and the choice of suitable sacrifices (indicated in terms of color, combination of colors, animals, combinations of animals, substitute animals).

The text further stimulates and focuses prophylactic interests, by indicating the following concomitants of illnesses which threaten for the future: 1) The days,

[29] Stars one, five and nine are identified by name with fire; two, six, and ten with earth; three, seven and eleven with air; four, eight and twelve with water. Debteras trace the origins of awdunigist variously to the court of Solomon and to certain monasteries of medieval Ethiopia.

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*787 • 539 months, and years (zemene) which are non-propitious for the subject's well-being, 2) the age to which the subject will probably live and the age (always markedly longer) to which he may live if appropriate prophylaxes are employed, 3) bad omens (often indicated as a color of men, animals, or land), 4) dangerous places and environmental conditions. (The text likewise indicated propitious dates, omens, and places.) In addition, the text describes the subject's social persona and the responses it will (eventually) elicit from the people with whom he interacts.

*787 539 75 While the kokob text addresses a variety of interests, the texts of the second awdunigist category are more specialized. From a medical point of view, these texts can be divided into the following six types, according to the services that each provides:

1. These are exclusively medical texts, providing detailed information of prophylactic, diagnostic, and therapeutic utility, and coinciding with the range of medical interests considered by the kokob text. This information is relevant to the period specified by the debtera in his calculations.

[774] 2. These texts name the saints, angels, and biblical persons who are particularly disposed to assisting the subject. Although this information is not exclusively of medical relevance, it is useful for constructing the

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kitab and addressing personal petitions by the client.

3. These texts provide prognosis for the subject's (unspecified) ailments. Prognoses are generally given as combinations of the following oppositions: a)life : death, b)(if life,) complete recovery : lingering ailment or disability, c)(if complete recovery,) rapid recovery : slow recovery.

4. These texts indicate medical information, generally specifying pathogenic agents and named ailments, which threaten this subject during the period specified by the debtera in his calculations. The information is, however, cursory and often mixed with matters of no real medical significance.

5. These texts provide general indications of the dangers and misfortunes which threaten the subject, but fail to indicate whether these misfortunes affect the subject's health. Such texts enable the debtera to inquire about periods (year or month of a specific year) which are of special interest to the debtera and his client. Here, the debtera includes in his calculations the numerical values of the year or month and year about which the inquiry is being made. Often, these texts also indicate what segment of the specified period is particularly threatening.

6. These texts provide no information of likely medical importance, but consider matters such as propi-

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*787 *539 75 tious occupations, journeys and marriages (thus paralling information also given in the kokob text).

Appendix D provides illustrations of medically relevant information which can be obtained from awdunigist texts.

*787 *218 *755 *793 539 In the main, a debtera acquires awdunigist texts individually, just as he collects digams, kitab recipes, and herbalist therapies.[30] Awdunigist repertoires therefore vary in comprehensiveness from debtera to debtera.

*787 539 178 437 Moreover, "definitive" versions of awdunigist texts are unknown; whatever their common origins may have been, extant texts are probably unique products of many adventitious deletions and additions. Deletions are most likely when texts are transmitted from seller to buyer. At that time, details are sometimes withheld by the seller, in order to secure additional payments, or as a bond

[30] Over the last three decades, the accessibility of awdunigist texts has been affected by the publication, in Asmara, of a collection of these texts. Most are in Amharic, but perhaps a quarter are in Ge'ez entirely or in part. Although many debteras demean these texts, they are in fact used, particularly by "weak" debteras. Public illiteracy, ignorance of the book's existence, of where it can be obtained, of the precise manipulations it requires, together with the limited utility its contents hold for the layman, and the fear of putative satanic associations have prevented its diffusion to the debtera's public, however.

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against continued services from the buyer. This practice occurs, in fact, in the transmission of all categories of debtera works. For example, while relating therapeutic information, the seller may indicate that he has omitted an ingredient, or he may identify it with an ambiguous or obscure nomer. Should the would-be purchaser subsequently fail to satisfy the owner, the incomplete therapeutic notation must be deleted from the text. On the other hand, debteras frequently add information to texts, first inserting it as marginalia and then, once its efficacy has been accepted, including it within the text when recopying or transmitting it.

+ +756 793 +759 prior to professional consultation. Rather, it comments incompletely on the appropriateness of a therapy already applied, choosing between "household diagnosis is correct", and "household diagnosis is possilby incorrect". On the other hand, the debtera diagnoses by means of awdunigist, and can provide information concerning the choice of an effective therapy. Moreover, the debtera is generally consulted for serious ailments, many of which are identifiable as cases of poisoning (mers) or sorcery (sray) which have been instigated by a human enemy of the sickman. Here, the debtera diagnoses not only the correct disease-name, but also indicates the [751] probable identity of the malfactor.[32] Beyond its incidental therapeutic value, this is necessary for preventing the future occurence of this syndrome or an analogous one, by directing prophylaxis against the pathogenic agency and counter-measures (i.e., physical or magical assault, change of residence, or reconciliation) regarding the sickman's human persecutor.

* [787] • [539] Awdunigist addresses a client's congenital vulnerabilities, whether or not these have been actually

[32] The debtera "assists" in identifying this individual, by indicating various characteristics, but does not actually name him.

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breached. Thus, the information it provides regarding pathogenesis is equally relevant and detailed for prescribing prophylaxis, as it is for selecting therapy. The secular healer, in contrast, is unequipped to prescribe prophylaxis, except for the inconclusive and preliminary indications given by the hilimefoc. In addition to prescribing prophylaxes, the debtera provides protective kitabs for a great variety of medical contingencies. Among secular healers, only the tokwariy (tattooist) is able to perform prophylactic works, and these provide very imperfect protection against only a small number of ailments.

Laymen assess differences between their own medical procedures and those of debtera-healers most precisely with regards to the preparation and administration of therapy. Most details regarding the preparation and administration of the debtera's medical works are unavailable, directly at least, to the layman. In these areas, he perceives the debtera's medical works by means of a series of semblances, linking the "asmat" (magic) which appear in secular therapies with the esoteric activities the debtera is known or assumed to perform in his own therapies. Among the important "asmat" of secular therapies are the use of prescribed instruments for gathering and processing of medicaments, the special condition of the gatherer, the numerological content of pharmacology

754 kifat works require special conditions of the operator, generally that he remain chaste for a designated period prior to the operation, and often require that the kifat work is performed in a room where no sexual relations have taken place. In the second type of pathogenic kifat works, recitation and manipulation are followed by burying the materials (denkero) close by the victim's place of sleeping and eating, generally beneath the threshhold of his hut. Non-pathogenic kifat works are sent from a distance only.

*787 754 *539 Competence in the use of awdunigist texts is considered a prerequisite for the effective use of kifat works, and laymen are well aware of the anti-therapeutic uses of these texts. If attack by a kifat work is to succeed, information must be obtained beforehand regarding the special vulnerabilities of the intended victim. For this information, the debtera turns to awdunigist, reading it just as he would for a client, noting periods of danger, ailments, misfortunes, and pharmacological information. This information is used to select an appropriate type of unhappiness; in addition, it indicates effective materials for the operation of the kifat works, particularly regarding characteristics of animals to be sacrificed or whose organs are to be used.

*756 *793 764 Acquiring and Using Kifat Works. The considerations which influence a debtera to acquire inoffensive shinet

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plexy, the ailment with which ganels characteristically choose to afflict burdensone callers. To avoid this, a ganel puller typically enlarges his list of ganel familiars. In the end he succeeds only in increasing his number of ganel antagonists and, through his continuing familiarity with ganels, courts a sign of divine displeasure (mekseft).[38] Significantly, the ganel puller fears that participating in the Mass will be his ultimate affront to divine patience. Thus, he abstains from entering the church and deprives himself of the ecclesiastical identity which he prizes so much.

The debtera's decision to abandon his ganel familiars causes no fundamental disruption in his abinet career as less objectionable alternatives to ganel pulling become available. A man's reputation as a ganel sabiy generally places him in a favorable position in any exchange of abinet, for it tends to validate his claims regarding his own works, and guarantees him fair dealing by other debteras. Thus, the debtera continues to acquire abinet studies even while actively pulling ganels.

[38] Additional familiars appear to be obtained through acquiring new abinet texts, or assembling (from a category of generic texts which describe the ganel commanders) combinations of data relevant to the pulling, interrogating, and sending of familiars.

*756 *793 The debtera-healer faces two practical obstacles to obtaining public recognition of his power. First, [751] his most frequent works are prophylactic kitabs; however, prophylactic success can be assessed only over a period of many years.[45] Second, the overt expression of abinet powers is often prosaic, without visible signs *[787] of the extraordinary forces at work. These two diffi- *[539] culties in communicating his power are met, in part, by the debtera's display of esoteria during diagnosis, when he manipulates awdunigist texts in the presence of his clients, and during the preparation of therapy, when the otherwise secretive debtera sends his client to obtain some exotic ingredient which is necessary for the work.

*756 *793 *755 Mithat. The debtera goes beyond these displays, however, to simulate, through the use of mithat, dramatic demonstrations of his putative magical powers (asmat). The debtera distinguishes mithat from other abinet subjects by the fact that mithat require no recitation or ritual beyond the spurious performances required to impress his public, and that the mundane materials used in the work are sufficient to produce the desired effects.

[434] [45]The sale of kitabs usually provides the abinet-using debtera with the greatest portion of his income.

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APPENDIX D

EXAMPLES OF AWDUNIGIST DIVINATORY TEXTS

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A. The Twelve Stars. Required input is the subject's autonym, month, year (zemene) and diurnal phase of his birth; division is by twelve. The following is a translation of the medically-relevant information pertaining to men of the first star (i.e., remainder of one), Hamil Iysat ("intense fire"):

"The year of Matiyows is in general a bad time for him. Sickness will affect his stomach, head, and left leg during the month of Tekemt. If poison should be administered to him, it is certain to prove fatal. When fifteen and when twenty-two years old, he will be very sick. When he is fifty years old he will suffer serious misfortunes. During the months of Meskarum, Heydar, Megarid, Sañey of the year of Luwkows, he will be particularly susceptible to wuwgat (pain) and saal (cough). When he becomes ill, he should use the leaf of the zigba tree as a fumitory; in addition, the gum (muwca) which appears at the spot where the leaf was picked must be eaten. Ganels and lions are a special danger to the Hamil Iysat man. When sick, he should eat sesame, owl, and the rose; in addition, he should use the wing of an owl as a fumitory. Good days for him are Monday, Tuesday and Saturday. Bad days for him are Wednesday, Friday

*787 or Sunday. Should he fall ill on Wednesday, Friday or
• 539 Sunday, prescribed treatment should include a kitab of
*[192] Mofte Sray (counter charm) written upon the skin of a white Adal sheep or upon a white goat skin. For aynitila, the Merbite Selomon book should be employed for writing a kitab. Treatment for ganel-inflicted sickness should include the text of Seyfe Melicot and the sacrifice of white and red sheep, and red chickens with white markings. White clothes and white domestic animals will be good fortune for this man. He has enemies jealous of him who wish him harm. He may die when he is forty years old, but if he lives past this age, his life will be good and he will be prosperous. Red things are good for him, and he must live in a red (clay) land. Poison (yijeseb) administered to him by a woman will probably be fatal to him. He has many enemies, people who are jealous of him, and he must pray to the Almighty for pro-
*[192] tection. This man always wants to sleep with women, but kitin (syphilis), if contracted, will be likely to prove fatal. When he becomes ill, a sacrifice should be made of a brown and white sheep, or black sheep with white marking on its forehead; in addition, he should drink the blood found in the sheep's spleen. The Hamil Iysat man must be particularly careful of fires and of crossing, swimming, or coming into other contact with rivers or lakes. If he conforms to all of the above precau-

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tions, he will live until he is eighty-two years old."

B. Specialized Texts. Each of the following entries is representative of categories of awdunigist texts containing information of medical relevance. Each entry (with the exception of the last) is drawn from a different awdunigist text, and each is complete as it appears in the text.

I. An entry from a text indicating general dangers for a specified period:

"This month brings great danger, take care."

II. Entries from texts providing medical information which is cursory, often mixed with non-medical matters, and relevant for a specified period:

"Special dangers face you during the months of Ter and Magariyd. During that time, take care for thieves, misfortune and ganel-caused ailments."

"Be watchful during the first three weeks of the months of Magairyd, Soney, and Nahasiey. You will have an opp ortunity to defeat your enemies and to gain rank. If you are sick during these periods you will recover, but yihod basiyta (stomach ailment) will prove fatal."

"Take care until the fifteenth of the current month (i.e., the month for which the computation has been made), for great dangers face you. Your rival and
*[192] enemy will surely attempt to harm you. Be particularly watchful of denkera (ensorcelling medicine placed by the

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roadside)."

III. An entry from a text providing exclusively medical information for a specified period:

"On Wednesday he contracted the sickness, while eating food or washing his body. This sickness was caused by a female ganel or a buda. Ego's head, stomach, heart are affected, and his lower back aches; his entire body has bird (chills) and kurtimat (rheumatoid-like pains), takimat (diarrhea), nisir (nosebleed), towkit (vomiting), and ibac (painful cutaneous swelling, generally of the limbs) over the body. These effects come and go; you will be very sick for the first twelve days; then ras yazaral (dizziness), kijet (nightmare) relating to day-time events will begin, together with more wuwgat (pain). After one and a half years of this he will die. Appropriate medicine is a yiseytan dorow (wild fowl); cook the meat and burn the feathers as an olficant. He will recover for a time. The red chicken, tan (daliyda) goat and sheep, red and gold breasted (libiwork) chicken, white and black (gebsima) chicken, black sheep with a white forehead (buwha) are appropriate sacrifices. Follow instructions noted under his star. All will then be well."

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IV. Entries from texts indicating which saints, angels, and biblical persons are disposed to assisting the subject:

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"Fear neither ganels nor evil men, for the angel Gabrael will be with you."

"Do not journey during the current month, for you will face death along the way. Death is coming to you; you must pray to Saint Nikael, and sacrifice a white sheep."

V. A complete set of entries from a single text providing prognostic information:

1. will die
2. will live, but never recover completely
3. will live without sickness
4. will die
5. a limb (or the use of a limb) will be lost
6. will suffer a chronic illness, but will eventually recover
7. will recover soon